IMPERIAL YELLOW: LOCAL PHENOMENA, TRANSNATIONAL FEARS, AND THE CHANGING IMAGE OF THE CHINESE IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITAIN

by

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ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, the Chinese were an enigmatic presence in the British imagination and occupied multiple positions at once—poor coolies and shrewd businessmen, masculine Boxer rebels and effeminate sodomites. They were intimate yet alien, imagined to be segregated but often assimilated into British society. These contradictory images made it difficult for the British to pin down the Chinese in the imperial framework. This thesis argues that there was no one image of Chinese men. Instead I demonstrate that the shifting political relationship between Great Britain and China, and the unique status of the Chinese as both semi-colonial and independent citizens, complicated the ways in which the British media, government, and public imagined Chinese men.

Whereas the scholarship on the Yellow Peril suggests a global perspective, the problems the Chinese generated were in fact very local events that were dependent upon very specific local situations. To demonstrate this, this thesis focuses on the Boxer Rebellion, the Transvaal Labor Dispute, and the rise of Chinese Laundries to argue that there were moments when the Chinese became problematic for the British because of the ways in which they generated anxieties about economics, class, geopolitics, and sexuality. Through the study of these particular moments, I will demonstrate that British images of the Chinese were not stable but malleable and that multiple contradictory images of Chinese men existed simultaneously. I argue therefore that the construct of the

Yellow Peril is inadequate to explain British-Chinese relations in the early twentieth century.

For my parents, for forcing me to read the King James Version Bible, one of the most difficult texts to analyze, and for buying me books before Barbies.

For my lgbtq community, for reminding me that family is fluid and academia applicable.

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INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century, the Chinese were an enigmatic presence in the British imagination. At one point, China was a respected country and at another a fallen power and savage state. China was the Old Mongol Empire, brutish and wild. It was part of the New Asiatic Empire, capable of creating an army large enough to invade and overwhelm Europe. The Chinese were the colonized men of Hong Kong and the concession ports, the placid consumers of European goods. But they were also producers as coolies, slave laborers with whom some British subjects sympathized. The Chinese were intimate yet alien, segregated but integrated into British society, poor coolies and shrewd businessmen.

These contradictory images of China in Britain's history made it difficult to pin down the Chinese in the imperial framework. This thesis considers this shifting image of China within early twentieth century British history, the unique status of the Chinese as both semicolonial and independent citizens, and argues that the ambiguous status of China complicated the way the British media and public imagined Chinese men. In an age fragmented by social, economic, and political change, British theorists were trying to formulate a unified vision. The relationship of China with the West worked against these attempts at unity, for China worked outside the British boundaries of colonized and

colonizing, civilized and uncivilized.[1] Though Britain attempted to create a unified stereotype of the Chinese under the discourse of Yellow Peril, when examined closely, it becomes clear that there was no coherent image of the Chinese that circulated in early twentieth century British culture. Rather, multiple contradictory images of Chinese men existed simultaneously. In order to examine these images of Chinese men generated in early twentieth century Britain, my research works at the junctions of literature on imperialism, ethnic immigration, labor in the British Empire, gender and sexuality and combines these areas to understand the source of these stereotypes and their function in British society.

To understand the complicated relationship between Great Britain and China at the turn of the century, we must first consider the interactions between the two nations. With the Yongle Emperor's decision in the thirteenth century to restrict contact with the West, the West relied on few imported objects and traveller's tales to create an idea of the Orient. Due to China's seclusion from global markets, Europe created its own rendering of what this land meant. In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Britain, as well as Europe in general, experienced a fascination with all things Eastern. This movement became known as *chinoiserie*.[2]

China became the idyllic model of how a country should run, with an emperor

[1] For more on this argument from a literary perspective, see Shanyn Fiske, "Orientalism Reconsidered: China and the Chinese in Nineteenth Century Literature and Victorian Studies," *Literature Compass* 8.4 (April 2011): 214-226.

[2] For more on Britain and *chinoiserie*, see Fan Cuzhong, "The Beginnings of the Influence of Chinese Culture in England," in *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Adrian Hsia, 69-86 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998); Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Beevers, *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930* (Brighton: Royal Pavilion and Museums, 2008); Elizabeth Chang, *Britain's Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

acting as father and example of moral uprightness, and with the people as obedient subjects, looking to benefit the nation through filial piety and loyalty to the emperor. The great respect Enlightenment philosophers held for Confucius and his writings eventually trickled down to literature, although it was most apparent in art and architecture and landscaping.[3]

Under the influence of *chinoiserie*, Europeans changed their gardens from the symmetrical designs of Versailles to the Chinese style of gardens with pavilions situated near water as well as octagonal summerhouses to resemble a smaller form of the Temple of Heaven and other places of respect and beauty in China.[4] Inside the home, men and women hoarded and relished Chinese porcelain, and the wealthy took to collecting Chinese influenced tapestries. In the homes of those who could afford to follow modern trends, there was a rise in *chinoiserie* wallpaper with patterns lively and bold.[5] Dukes and lords now decorated their mansions and estates in an oriental style with tables and chairs made of bamboo, elaborately embellished wallpapers, and landscapes to match the assumed designs of the emperor's gardens.[6] The gentry and prosperous classes of Great Britain studied at the feet of Chinese culture.[7]

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[3]Most famously in the tapestries, porcelain, and garden designs of the 17th and early 18th centuries. For more on this, see Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiseries*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1993); Qian Zhongshu, "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Adrian Hsia, 117-213, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998); David Franses, *Chinoiseries European Tapestry and Needlework: 1680-1780* (London: Candor Print, 2006); Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1977).

[4] Martin Powers, "Visualizing the State in Early Modern England and China," in *Comparative Early Modernities*, edited by David Porter (New York: Palgrave, 2012), in press.

[5]These patterns included hunting scenes, nature scenes, or vignettes of everyday life which showed the various stages of tea cultivation or the making of porcelain.

[6]Anyone interested in these forms of *chinoiserie* could see such designs in William Halfpenny's *New Designs for Chinese Temples, Triumphal Arches, Garden Seats, Palings* (London, Robt. Sayer, 1750) and Sir William Chamber's *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, Utensils* (London, 1757).

[7] For more on the influence of Chinese culture on British society, see Elizabeth Chang, *Britain's Chinese*

Despite this steady presence of Chinese culture, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Chinese had opened Canton for trading, thus creating a window for inspection into the mysterious world of China.[8] Although this was a small opening, the knowledge of Chinese ways and interference into Chinese affairs would grow over the following century. As Robert Fortune described in 1847 in his book *Wanderings in China*, "'the curtain which had been drawn around the celestial country for ages has now been rent asunder; and instead of viewing an enchanting fairy-land, we find, after all, that China is just like other countries'."[9] No longer did China hold enchantment for England. That time had passed, and the age of industrialization, commercialism, and consequently British hubris began.[10] In the nineteenth century, Great Britain and China had a combatant and increasingly unequal relationship, and the treaties which ended the First and Second Opium Wars allowed for Great Britain's greater involvement in the affairs of China and increased exposure to Chinese people.[11]

During the "scramble for China" and the treaties following both Opium Wars, the British acquired concession ports along the coast and special privileges and favored nation status with the Qing Empire. In addition to these concession ports, the British held

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Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[8] In 1759, the Qianlong Emperor designated Canton as the only port open to foreign trade, but still, numerous regulations limited the contact between foreigners and the residents of China.

[9] David Franses, *Chinoiseries European Tapestry and Needlework*, 177.

[10] An example of this hubris can be seen in George III's letter to and Lord Macartney's interactions with the Qianlong Emperor. See James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

[11] This was due to the unequal treaties following the First and Second Opium Wars. See James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

Hong Kong, Kowloon, and the New Territories as a formal colony.[12] Along the coast, Britain held partial control over agreed upon areas within selected concession ports; over the island of Hong Kong, they held complete control; beyond these areas, they still needed to negotiate with the Qing bureaucrats.[13] In some of these concession ports and settlement areas, most notably Hong Kong and Shanghai, Chinese lived within British-sanctioned areas but were still answerable to the Qing government. The Qing and British empires' authority were both blurred.[14] There were no clear delineations where Qing sovereignty ended and British sovereignty began. At times and in the above mentioned areas, the Chinese were both subjects of Britain and subjects of China. This ambiguous position of the Chinese complicated the status of Chinese men in the British Empire. Chinese, especially those who could speak English or could link themselves to Hong Kong, thus held mobile citizenship.

Mobility and movement were key to empire, for empire created paths for the exchange of products, ideas of civilization and domesticity, but also paths which brought "new barbarians" to the homeland.[15] Yellow Peril was the fear that the white world

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[12] After the First Opium War (1839-1842), the British acquired the island of Hong Kong. After the Second Opium War (1856-1860), also referred to as the Arrow War, the British acquired Kowloon, and in 1898, the British acquired The New Territories to complete what is now commonly known as "Hong Kong".

[13] For a better understanding of the workings of concession ports, see Robert Bickers, "Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937," *Past & Present* 159 (1998): 161-211; for a specific case showing the complicated nature of split sovereignty in Shanghai, see Elizabeth Dale's "Pushing the Boundaries of the Public Sphere: The *Su Bao* Case and Everyday Citizenship in China, 1894-1904," *Social Science Research Network*, http://ssrn.com/abstract=1825954 [Accessed April 29, 2011].

[14] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), specifically the chapter "Census, Map, Museum."; Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of India, 1756-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Morag Bell, Robin Alan Butlin and Michael J. Heffernan, *Geography and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

[15] For more on this argument, see Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1994): 127-139.

would be swamped by these "new barbarians", specifically yellow bodies, and fears that the yellow race had a desire to uproot Western dominance and undermine Western culture. Through cultural imperialism of the late nineteenth century, European countries expressed Western dominance and exported Western culture and broad ideas of what it meant to be civilized—hygiene, religion, politics, ethics, etc.[16] With this exportation of Western culture and ideas of civilization also came the desire to defend it against opposing notions of civilization. Part of this project was illuminating supposedly distinct differences and creating the binary of East and West. To better promote Western culture and dominance, one had to demote Eastern culture. They could not share similarities. This would imply that they also shared influence and power. An important step of creating this discourse was creating images to support the ideology. For the Orient, this ideology was Yellow Peril.

If the "yellow race" came together as a collective group, they had the military, economic, and cultural capabilities to contest white supremacy, thus these two races—the white and the yellow—were destined to struggle against each other. It is important to note that this was labeled Yellow Peril, not Asian or Oriental Peril. This fear was not of a particular region but of a particular race, thus anyone of Chinese descent no matter where they were born or where they lived should be feared and cautioned.[17]

This belief was most easily embodied in literature. In popular fiction, the Chinese were portrayed as predators of Western society, targeting white supremacy and white

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[16] For books that serve as an introduction to cultural imperialism, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, Inc., 1995); Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

[17] For more on this, see Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999), 2.

women.[18] Yellow Peril had a distinct emphasis on the deceitful nature of the Chinese, their cunning designs on the Western world, and their insatiable desire for white women. However, Yellow Peril had no fixed definition. Though the literature of Yellow Peril seems fantastic and irrational in its plots, these served a purpose—to keep social order. Yellow men were not to be leaders of white governments or lovers of white women.[19] This broad purpose of Yellow Peril allowed it to be flexible in its usage and in its images.

Generally, British historians have treated Yellow Peril as an all-encompassing reference to the image of Chinese men around the turn of the century. Those who use Yellow Peril to support their arguments about Chinese in British politics and society do so without deconstructing Yellow Peril and how it changed over time in Britain and in the British colonies.[20] They bundle these images of Chinese men together under the term of Yellow Peril without tracking how these images were constructed and without questioning the complexities of how these images were created. While Yellow Peril was flexible, the understanding of historians is more rigid. But in the British context, Yellow Peril was not as neat as previous scholars have implied.

By deconstructing Yellow Peril, how it changed and fluctuated with the concerns of the time, how it was employed to uphold social order, we can learn much about the

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[18] See Gary Hoppenstand, "Yellow Devil Doctors and Opium Dens: The Yellow Peril Stereotype in Mass Media Entertainment," in *Popular Culture: An Introductory Text*, edited by John G. Nachbar and Kevin Lausé (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 280; for more on Yellow Peril specifically in children's literature, see Kathryn Castle, *Britannia's Children: Reading Colonialism through children's books and magazines* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). For examples of this in popular fiction, see the works of Sax Rohmer.

[19] Most famous example of such a yellow peril plot would be Sax Rohmer's serialized fiction about Fu Manchu. For more on Sax Rohmer and Fu Manchu, see Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia," *Cultural Critique* 62.1 (2006): 162-194.

[20] In the British context, this includes Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle" in Imperial Britain* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) and Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls: The Birth of the British Underground* (London: Granta Press, 2001). For an example of a British historian who has deconstructed the category of race, tracked how it changed over time and the complexities of its creation, see Laura Tabili, *"We Ask for British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late-Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

relationship between Britain and its colonies and about the global connections of knowledge and images across the British Empire. In this thesis, I will track the changing image of "the Chinaman" from colony to colony to metropole and will interrogate the creation of these images and how and why they changed.[21] This thesis focuses on the Boxer Rebellion, the Transvaal Labor Dispute, the rise of Chinese Laundries—to argue that these were moments when the Chinese became problematic for the British because of the ways in which they tapped into anxieties on economics, class, geopolitics, and sexuality. Through the study of these particular moments, I will demonstrate that the British generated images of the Chinese were not stable but malleable. The Chinese could thus be useful scapegoats in any number of contexts.

While Yellow Peril suggests a global perspective and Britain attempted to create a unified stereotype, the problems the Chinese generated were in fact very local events that were dependent upon very specific local situations. The Yellow Peril stereotypes could be stretched to fit any number of concerns, both colonial and metropolitan. Britain's inability to pin down Chinese men in the imperial framework was problematic for the government and the media. But it was precisely this instability that made the Chinese such useful scapegoats for the turn-of-the-century anxieties over whiteness and British imperial dominance.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, as scholars have argued, the British

[21] Raymond Dawson in his work *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) attempts to analyze the changing conceptions of China though his work is quite broad in scope and does not spend adequate time considering the numerous images which are often labeled under Yellow Peril. Jonathan Spence gives a non-theoretical, accessible retracing of the changing image of the Chinese in *The Great Chan's Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

popular opinion of the Chinese shifted.[22] Before the early twentieth century, Chinese men within Britain were rarely viewed as threatening. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the representation of Chinese in the media increased and turned to a focus on their being an economic threat through labor and a sexual threat through their contact with white women. Sascha Auerbach argues that the political resistance to the Chinese in Australia and in South Africa is partially responsible for the change and that anti-immigration discourse in these two colonies returned to London and altered the view of Chinese. The Chinese changed from harmless opium smokers to coolies who directly threatened the working-class and to "cunning" men who were an immoral influence upon the working classes and young, impressionable women.[23]

However, I would argue there was no clear change of opinion about the Chinese. Instead, the unique relationships of the Chinese as a once highly respected people and their current status as semicolonial individuals complicated the way the British imagined Chinese men, and these contradictory images continued but in mediums outside of popular media—in government reports, personal testimonials, and in the fiction of writers outside of the Yellow Peril genre. For this reason, I will examine the government reports of the Liverpool City Council and the Bucknill Report on homosexuality in the South African mines and will do a close reading of Thomas Burke's *Limehouse Nights,* a collection of short stories incorrectly labeled by some as Yellow Peril fiction.

Since scholars have used newspapers and Yellow Peril fiction—both popular forms of media with an agenda—to chart this change of opinion, some of these

[22] For examples of this scholarship, see Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle,"* Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon*, and Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls*.
[23] Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle,"* 18.

contradictory images have been overlooked. [24] It is tempting to sort sources into bins of anti-Chinese sentiment and pro-Chinese sentiment, and by doing so, support the racial binary already represented by newspapers and popular fiction. Auerbach uses the fiction of Sax Rohmer and Thomas Burke to show that anti-Chinese sentiment influenced popular culture and fiction. While debauched and cunning Chinese men consistently appear in Sax Rohmer's works, not all Chinese characters in Burke's *Limehouse Nights* reflect anti-Chinese sentiment.

In some stories, Burke writes sympathetically about Chinese men. Not every Chinese man is a villain nor are they all loyal subjects and honorable husbands. In the British imagination, the Chinese were not whole-heartedly viewed as unwholesome and immoral. Much like the complicated nature of the Chinese within the empire, the depiction of Chinese men in the metropole was also complicated and cannot be succinctly described through the lens of anti-Chinese sentiment. The use of Thomas Burke as a Yellow Peril writer is one example of the inadequacies of research which works within the racial binary of yellow and white.[25]

Not only does this implication of their being a cohesive anti-Chinese sentiment support the racial binary of yellow and white, it also implies that there was an agreed upon idea of nation and British identity, something for the Chinese identity to counter. But British national identity was more fluid than previous arguments have contended.[26]

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[24] See Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle"* and Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls.*

[25] For an example of recent research in literary and linguistic studies which works outside of this binary of yellow and white, East and West, see Elizabeth Chang's *Britain's Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* and Lydia Liu's *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making and Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity-China, 1900-1937* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[26] For a recent argument on the culturally and racially diverse Britain, see Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841-1939* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

Britain at the turn of the century was becoming a multi-ethnic space, and between this changing national identity of Britain and the unique situation of China within empire, this left space for Chinese men to be both yellow peril and model minority, to be opium addicts, savage killers, homosexual catamites and pitied slave labor, useful consumers, and family men with values.[27]

While Auerbach's work argues that the initial stage of anti-Chinese sentiment came as a result of labor conflicts between the working class and Chinese men coming into England, I would argue that these supposed anti-ethnic sentiments were one way the government attempted to control these new identities being created in England. Definitions of racial difference, as Laura Tabili argues, "like masculinity and femininity, have been sensitive to economic and political change, mediated by class and gender, and manipulated by elites in the pursuit of power."[28] In Tabili's research, she finds that the "boundary between Black and white was drawn, not merely on the basis of physical appearance, but on relations of power, changing over time."[29] From the study of Chinese and British relations, we know that their relationship of power has been inconsistent and shifting. Unlike Africans and Indians under colonial control, only portions of the Chinese population were under British control, and the numbers of Chinese who were under colonial control changed with each treaty signed and each new territory Britain acquired. If race was a political constraint, not just a biological or cultural one, then the image of the Chinese race would change as the politics between Britain and China changed. This thesis argues that it did and seeks to map those changes starting with the Boxer Rebellion.

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[27] For a further explanation of this argument, see Antoinette Burton's "Who Needs the Nation?" *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10.3 (September 1997).
[28] Laura Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925)," *Journal of British Studies* 33.1 (January 1994), 59.
[29] Laura Tabili, "The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain," 61.

CHAPTER ONE

BENIGN CURIOSITY TO YELLOW PERIL: THE CHANGING IMAGE OF THE CHINAMAN

In the combatant political climate between Great Britain and China during the late nineteenth century, the Boxer Rebellion was the lowest possible moment and as such acted as a turning point in the relationship between Britain and China, as a turning point for the image of Chinese men, and as a turning point into the twentieth century.[1] The media's coverage of the Boxer Rebellion, its emphasis on the savage behavior of the Chinese Boxer rebels and its use of technology and photography to share sensationalist reporting combined to change the way British society viewed the Chinese, from a benign curiosity to a yellow peril, from individuals to a horde to be feared. The reports of the rebellion—newspaper coverage, personal stories of missionaries and businessmen, popular histories of the event—returned to the metropole and influenced the way the British imagined their Chinese neighbours and the Chinese in other colonies.

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[1] The secret society Righteous Harmony of Fists began in Shandong Province in 1898 and by 1900 the rebellion had spread to Beijing. For more on the conflicts between Great Britain and China, see James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*; Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Rebellion* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2012); Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914.* For histories specifically on the Boxer Rebellion, see Paul Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (Columbia University Press, 1998); Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners that Shook the World in the Summer of 1900* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001); Joseph Esherisk, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (University of California Press, 1988); David J. Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China* (Hill and Wang, 2012).

The retellings of the Boxer Rebellion comprise a sizeable portion of writings by British living and working in China. But prior to these narratives, there was a significant body of literature produced by the British for British audiences about Chinese culture. British coverage of the Boxer Rebellion was thus merely one piece of a larger transnational discourse.[2] Missionaries, scientists, travellers, businessmen, and diplomats, both men and women—multiple participants wrote of their experiences in China, and their writings shaped the opinions of the British about the Chinese.

Arthur Smith, an American missionary in northern China, wrote several books about Chinese people and Chinese character. Within each chapter of his book *Chinese Characteristics*, Smith "elaborated on the category by telling anecdotes and making generalized (and relentlessly comparative) statements about the Chinese race as a whole."[3] Often, American and British writers in China emphasized Chinese characteristics, implying that the British stereotypes of the Chinese were grounded in their character and culture. These descriptions and their explanations of the differences in the British and Chinese people intrigued the British public. In fact, Smith's book *Chinese Characteristics* "enjoyed great popularity among Westerners in Asia, as well as in Britain, the United States, and Canada and reached a wide audience, religious and secular alike … and is among the five most read books on China among foreigners living in China."[4]

Though these memoirs of China enjoyed metropolitan popularity, in China,

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[2] For more on transnationalism and the Chinese diaspora, see Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and China, 1882-1943* (Pasadena, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999); Lynn Pann, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese* Diaspora (1994).

[3] Lydia Liu, *Transnational Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 56.

[4] Lydia Liu, *Transnational Practice*, 51.

British travelers visiting and those living there often had difficulty reconciling their admiration for Chinese culture and civilization with their belief that the country needed to be westernized. As Nicholas Clifford describes, "for all its dirt, smells, and incomprehensible manners China could be seen as the home of an ancient and highly literate civilization and a complex and sophisticated polity. Not a Western polity, to be sure, but still one deserving of Western respect and from which the West might even have something to learn."[5] The majority of British writers recognized this and mixed together their curiosity of strange Chinese habits and their admiration of Chinese civilization. Publishers in London circulated these texts, and people across Great Britain read these memoirs and narratives.[6] Thus long before the Boxer Rebellion, the British public had access to a wide variety of publication on China and had established a vested interest in China.[7]

Technology allowed this access to international events. Events from across the globe and across Chinese provinces were wired to the metropole, and though oceans apart, British subjects could read of colonial concerns no matter the location. Technology

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[5] Nicholas R. Clifford, *"A Truthful Impression of the Country": British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 16.

[6] For more on British writings of China from those who either travelled or lived in China, see Elizabeth Chang, *British Travel Writing from China* (Harvard, CT: Harvard University Press, 2004); Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999); Jeffrey N. Dupee, *British Travel Writers in China-Writing Home to a British Public, 1890-1914* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004); Nicholas R. Clifford, *"A Truthful Impression of the Country": British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2001).

[7] For examples of these wide interests and unique interpretations of China, see Robert Fortune, *Three Years' Wanderings* (London: John Murray, 1847), *Journey to the Tea Countries* (London, John Murray, 1852), *A Residence among the Chinese* (London: John Murray, 1857), and *Yedo and Peking* (London: John Murray, 1863); Walter Medhurst, *A Glance at the Interior of China* (London: J. Snow Co., 1850); Major Henry Knollys, *English Life in China* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1885); Arthur Henderson Smith, *Village Life in China* (Fleming H. Revell, 1889); Arthur Henderson Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1894); Isabella Bird, *The Golden Chersonese* (London: John Murray, 1883) and *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond* (London: John Murray, 1900); Constance Gordon Cummings, *Wanderings in China* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1900); Mrs. Archibald Little, *Intimate China* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1901).

connected colonial and metropolitan affairs, allowing the general public to be much more involved and invested in the affairs of empire. The Boxer Rebellion was one of the first colonial affairs affected by this new technology, especially photographic journalism. During the height of the Boxer Rebellion from June through September 1900, each day, the newspapers printed updates on the Taku Forts of Tianjin or the British Legation in Peking.[8] The conflicts across China fed the images produced and consumed in London.[9] Through novels and in the newspapers focusing on the Boxer Rebellion, the British public had new images of the Chinese—different from the prior publications of the nineteenth century—to consume and process.

Fiction and other popular forms of media work as a diagnostic. In the late nineteenth century, stories in the papers and novels sold in bookstores indicated the anxieties of an age. For the British Empire, the turn of the century was a time of great anxiety. Across the globe, Britain clashed with the Asante tribe in Ghana, the Dutch Afrikaners in the Transvaal, the Madhist in the Sudan, and the Boxers in China. The situation in China differed from that in those other regions. This clash of the British and Qing empires and the open killing of British missionaries created a keen interest in the crisis in China and caused uneasiness among readers, especially when it came to the killing of missionaries in China. Journalists and photographers from the eight-nation Alliance traveled across northern China to document the violence of the Boxer Rebellion, and afterwards, novelists created plots which absorbed these realities of war and added to

[8] For more on the newspaper representation during the Boxer Rebellion, see Jane E. Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilisation Some did It for Their Country: A Revised View of the Boxer War* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002).

[9] It should be noted that images in London often depended upon which sources they originated from in Chin. For an example of competing discourses influencing British politics and British opinion of the Chinese in the context of the Taiping Civil War, see Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 164-189.

it romance and intrigue.[10]

Through this close attention on the affairs of China, interest in the Qing Empire and in the growing numbers of Chinese men living in England increased. In British newspapers, the Boxer Rebellion raised public awareness of the events in China, and the British media's concentration on this uprising combined with the presence of Boxer Rebellion literature helped to create a new image of Chinese men in literature. It allowed for a shift from the depiction of the Chinese as a benign curiosity to a yellow peril, from a lethargic, unproductive member of society to a violent menace to society.[11] After the Boxer Rebellion, the Chinese were no longer just single criminals but a horde to be feared.[12]

Prior to the Boxer Rebellion and to the labor unrest in South Africa and Australia, Chinese characters in novels and newspapers were depicted as nonthreatening. The Chinese tended to appear in popular culture as opium smokers, lethargic and placid. When they did appear as threatening, it was mostly to British men, more specifically middleclass men, as in, for example, Sherlock Holmes' Chinese character in "The Man

[10] Eight-Nation Alliance included Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States. For a sample of literature about the Boxer Rebellion, see Captain F.S. Brereton, *The Dragon of Pekin: A Tale of the Boxer Revolt (*London: Blackie and Son, 1902); Julian Croskey, *"The S.G.": A Romance of Peking (*London: Lamley, 1900); William Carleton Dawe, *The Plotters of Peking* (London: Everleigh Nash, 1907); George Manville Fenn, *Stan Lynn: A Boy's Adventures in China* (London: W & R Chambers, 1902); E. A. Freemantle, *Prince Tuan's Treasures and Other Interesting Tales of the "Boxer Rebellion of 1900"* (Vellore: The Record P, 1911); Captain Charles Gilson, *The Lost Column: A Story of the Boxer Rebellion in China* (London: Henry Frowde, 1909); W. Murray Graydon, *The Perils of Pekin* (London: John F. Shaw, 1904); G. A. Henty, *With the Allies to Pekin* (London: Blackie and Son, 1904); Constancia Serjeant, *A Tale of Red Peking* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1902); Percy F. Westerman, *When East Meets West: A Story of the Yellow Peril* (London: Blackie and Son, 1913).

[11] A similar change can be seen with the Irish, viewed as lovable but lazy, until the terrorist operations toward the mid-century, most notably the IRA. See L. P. Curtis' *Apes and Angels: Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971) and *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, CT: Published by the Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport; [distributed by New York University Press, New York, 1968]).

[12] See M.P. Shiel's *Yellow Danger* (London: Grant Richards, 1898). In this novel, the Chinese combine with the Japanese and create an unstoppable army that spreads from China to Europe before dying of cholera once they set up Paris as their new capital.

with the Twisted Lip." In this story, a respectable man, Mr. Neville St. Claire, goes missing. His wife, knowing her husband is an opium addict, believes he has binged on opium and is somewhere in the East End. While Mr. Neville St. Claire is, in fact, an opium addict, he is also a professional beggar and has been hiding this double life from his wife.[13] Throughout their years of marriage, Neville had been visiting the East End to beg for money to pay off debts and to smoke opium. As James Platt observed in 1900, Sherlock Holmes and other writers always referenced Chinese Limehouse as a place where gentlemen went to smoke opium.[14]

Before the Boxer Rebellion, the threat of the Chinese community focused on British men. With Chinese immigrants came opium. The two were interconnected. Everywhere Chinese men went, opium was sure to follow. Chinese men came to London. The trend of smoking opium followed. The government feared that this fascination with opium would create unproductive British men. Opium threatened the moral standards of England, exposed British men to corruption and to the routine of gambling, and through the fraternization of British people with inhabitants of the East End, encouraged miscegenation among the races and classes.[15]

Though Chinese men were opium smokers and were influencing British men, the British public believed these Chinese men did not have an agenda. These men were

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[13] Interestingly, Sherlock Holmes, the fictional character, was addicted to cocaine, a drug associated with the wealthier classes but by the 1920s was as well linked to Chinese men and music halls.

[14] As quoted in Anne Witchard, "A Threepenny Omnibus Ticket to 'Limey-housey- Causey-way': Fictional Sojourns in Chinatown" *Comparative Critical Studies* 4.2 (2007), 225-240.

[15] For more on the history of opium in England and its association with particular races and classes, see Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use in Nineteenth Century* England (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); Barry Milligan, *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in Nineteenth-Century British* Culture (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls: The Birth of the British* Underground (London: Granta Press, 2001); Howard Padwa, *Social Poison: The Culture and Politics of Opiate Control in Britain and France, 1821-1926* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

acting as individuals, and opium and gambling were just habits of the East and a part of Chinese culture. An example of this view is found in George A. Wade's article, "The Cockney John Chinaman." Written in July 1900, immediately before the breakout of the Boxer Rebellion, George Wade maintained, "English people of the neighborhood give the Celestials an excellent character for peacefulness and quietness. There is seldom, or never, any quarreling between them and their neighbors."[16] After spending time in Limehouse, Wade claims that there is "one marked trait, of which everybody tells you, regarding the Chinese here, their goodness and kindness to the children around them, not only to their own, but to the youngsters of strangers."[17] As for the complaints of Chinese men being opium addicts, Wade comments: "while I have learnt of one or two places where Chinamen do sit and fall into delicious reveries and dreams over the smoking of the narcotic, yet I should say that more has been made of it than there is warrant for."[18] In addition, Wade argues that one could find English men and women "lying dead drunk outside the doors," but a Chinese man when they smoke their pipes of opium do not make an "open spectacle of himself to all the world."[19]

Shortly after Wade wrote this commendatory piece, the British public would be reading of the barbaric behavior of Boxer rebels and about the possibilities of a "yellow" invasion. After the Boxer Rebellion, this perception of the Chinese as individuals changed, and British subjects began to fear that all Chinese men were agents of the Qing Empire. Writers in the 20th century began to embody these fears through "Yellow Peril" fiction, stories of Chinese men with undying loyalty to China, a desire to engulf Europe,

[16] George A. Wade, "The Cockney John Chinaman," *The English Illustrated Magazine*, July 1900, 304.
[17] George A. Wade, "The Cockney John Chinaman," 304.
[18] George A. Wade, "The Cockney John Chinaman," 306.
[19] George A. Wade, "The Cockney John Chinaman," 306.

and claim revenge for the injustices of colonialism.[20]

This shift in portrayals of Chinese, away from their association with opium and toward their depiction as a dangerous collective group, comes in part from the way the Boxer Rebellion was covered in British media. As James Hevia asserted in his study of Anglo-Chinese relations in the nineteenth century, the Boxer Rebellion impacted England so greatly at the turn of the century and continues "to reverberate today [because of] the enormous expansions of media coverage of [the rebellion], coverage that fundamentally altered reception and understanding of Chinese history in Europe."[21]

The Boxer Rebellion as Peter Fleming described it began as "a spontaneous, semi-clandestine popular movement" among the farmers in Shandong Province and spread across the border to the metropolitan province of *Zhili*.[22] Political impotence of the Qing Empire, droughts and bad harvests, encroachments of Western powers in Northern China, the impact of Western religion and technology on Chinese culture and traditions—these converged to create a desire among ordinary people to end the disruption and influence of Western imperialism on their lives.[23] This anger toward Western encroachment turned to violence against missionaries, Chinese converts, and others affiliated with the Western world. What began as a semiclandestine movement eventually had the tacit support of Cixi the Dowager Empress and the attention of the world.[24]

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[20] In British literature, Sax Rohmer is the most famous writer of yellow peril fiction. For an analysis of his fiction, see Tina Chen, "Dissecting the Devil Doctor: Stereotype and Sensationalism in Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu," in *Re/collecting Early Asian America*, edited by Josephine Lee, Imogene Lim, Yuko Matsukawa (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002). For more on yellow peril fiction in America, see William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction*, 1850-1940 (North Haven, CT: Archon Publishing, 1982); Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999).
[21] James Hevia, *English Lessons*, 187.
[22] Peter Fleming, *Siege of Peking* (New York: Harper, 1959), 23.
[23] For more on this argument, see James Hevia's *English Lessons*, 186.
[24] For more on a general history of the Boxer Rebellion, see Robert Bickers and R.G. Tiedemann, *The*

The Boxer Rebellion was one of the first localized conflicts to garner world-wide attention and to have its events covered in the new illustrated newspapers. The coverage of the Boxer Rebellion in illustrated newspapers allowed the public to see gruesome and pornographic pictures of war. These pictures only enhanced the already sensationalized coverage of the war. Soon complaints of China and the rebelling Chinese were found in letters of British officials, in memoirs of men and women living in China, in articles of news correspondents, in travel narratives written by pastors and adventurers, in histories written by scholars, and in papers all across England and in other parts of the world.[25] The sensational coverage of the conflict created suspense and encouraged this interest in the affairs of China.

Examples of such sensationalized coverage can be found in newspapers across England. The headings for *The Leeds Mercury* on July 6 included the following: "Terrible Rumour, Legations Reported Overwhelmed, Foreigners Massacred, Tragedies in Imperial Family, and Emperor and Empress Poisoned."[26] The same day, the *Birmingham Daily Post* reported "that all the foreigners to the number of 1,000 including 400 soldiers, 10 members of the Chinese Customs Staff, and women and children, held

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Boxers, China, and the World (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007); Jane Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilisation Some Did It for Their Country: A Revised View of the Boxer* War (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002); Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: Boxer Rebellion as Event. Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987).

[25] For a selection of these memoirs, photography collections, and histories, see Robert Coltman Jr., *Beleaguered in Peking* (Philadelphia, PA: Davis Company, Publishers, 1901); Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China* (London: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1909); Archibald Little, *Mrs. Intimate China* (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1901); Henry A. Savage-Landor, *China and The Allies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901); James Ricalton, *China through the Eyes of The Stereoscope: A Journey through the Dragon Empire at the Time of the Boxer Uprising* (New York: Underwood and Underwood, 1901); James Ricalton, *James Ricalton's photographs of China during the Boxer Rebellion : his illustrated travelogue of* 1900 (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1990); Mary Hooker, *Behind the Scenes in Peking: being experiences during the seige of the legations* (London: J. Murray Publishing, 1910); William Meyrick Hewlett, *Diary of the siege of the Peking legations, June to August, 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1900).

[26] *The Leeds Mercury*, Friday, July 6, 1900, Issue 19425, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.

out in the British Legation until ammunition and food were exhausted. The Legation was burned, and all the foreigners were killed."[27]

These headings left readers wondering what certainly had happened. Newspapers wanted its readers to be absorbed in the story and attracted to the uncertainty of the situation. This style of reporting, originated from W. T. Stead's exposé of child prostitution in London, meant to incite disbelief and suspense. Through his "Maiden Tribute" reporting, Stead fashioned a brand of journalism wherein the media could shape moral panics and sway public opinion and government involvement.[28] This new sensationalist style of journalism combined with the technology of telegraphs allowed Boxer Rebellion reports to go international. Following the journalistic style of W. T. Stead, the reporters of the Boxer Rebellion purposefully wrote sensationalized news, and with each update, newspapers delivered scandalous and shocking stories, much like something expected from a serialized adventure novel.

Yet, this possibility of being overpowered by an Asian power was no adventure novel. These were the events happening in northern China from Autumn 1897 to September 7, 1901. Much like reading the serialized fiction of H. Rider Haggard, readers could follow Charles Lowe's coverage of "The Crisis in China" in *The Graphic*.[29] Unlike the fragmented reporting of other newspapers, Charles Lowe wrote narratives filled with detailed descriptions of encounters between the Boxers and Allied armies and tributes to missionaries murdered. On June 16, 1900, he wrote of the late Rev. Charles Robinson

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[27] *Birmingham Daily Post*, Friday, July 6, 1900, Issue 13125, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.
[28] For more on the effects of Stead's "Maiden Tribute" reporting, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 121-134.
[29] See Charles Lowe's articles titled "The Crisis in China," *The Graphic*, July 21, 1900, Issue 1599; August 4, 1900, Issue 1601; August 11, 1900, Issue 1602; October 13, 1900, Issue 1611, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.

Kingsley and Rev. Harry Vine Norman, a very zealous missionary who was "murdered by the 'Boxers' at Yung-Qing."[30] With their pictures alongside their biographies, readers had a face to place with the story, pictures of young men who gave their lives to missions and were murdered. In one edition, Lowe added excerpts from the diary of Mr. J. G. Hancock, a member of the British Legation in Beijing. Hancock describes the bombing of Beijing: "The ball that burst my window came right through, broke its way through the mosquito curtains, hit the wall the other side, knocked down all the photos and pictures I had on any sitting-room wall, bounced back and fell on to the bed at the feet of a little lady who was asleep there. Rather a narrow escape."[31] These personal stories and images of those lives changed by the conflict added to Lowe's reporting a human face.

His coverage also included military information—information on not only the British armies but also the other international players involved—and images of weaponry and maps of the Allied army's movements. With these maps, his readers could track the movements of the Boxer and Allied forces, and with the figures he provided of how many soldiers were involved in the skirmishes and images of Indian troops boarding ships and pictures of German ships collecting war materials in Genoa, his readers had an idea of how involved and pressing this war was across the world. While this phenomenon of tracking the troops in battle dates back to the Crimean War, Lowe's use of this traditional way of covering war along with increased technology in communication and use of photography allowed his readers to have more accurate and up-to-date intelligence of the Boxer Rebellion and more stimulating images of what battle must have been like.

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[30] Charles Lowe, "The Crisis in China," *The Graphic*, July 21, 1900, Issue 1599, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.
[31] Charles Lowe, "The Crisis in China," *The Graphic*, October 13, 1900, Issue 1611, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.

To add context, Lowe made references to other imperial battles he knew his readers would recognize—"even from Sir Claude's comparatively meager dispatch it is clear that the fighting round the British Legation at Peking must have been as severe that which once raged at the Residency in Lucknow."[32] His readers would have recognized this reference to the infamous Siege of Lucknow during the Sepoy Mutiny, and their opinions of the Indian soldiers would influence their opinions of these Chinese rebels. Both groups of men through their violent actions were, as Lowe described, "uncivilized". In fact, Lowe frequently used the language of civilized versus uncivilized. In a report in July, he wrote, "All the civilised world is now practically at war with China—a war which must be primarily undertaken to wipe out the stains of the innocent blood that has been so foully shed."[33] Coverage of the Boxer Rebellion was an attempt to reinscribe stereotypes of China as an uncivilized land whose subjects shed the innocent blood of civilized peoples.

In his memoir, Robert Coltman described that with the Boxer Rebellion, the "masses [saw] that a very little country [could] defy a big government if only the hearts of the people [were] in the struggle."[34] The media needed to alter this image. The British public could not be read about a weaker country with heart, China, defying a stronger government with a military advantage, Great Britain. The Chinese needed to be portrayed as savage and violent, not as disciplined soldiers. Newspapers did not publish the pictures of Chinese soldiers using Western technology and being drilled the same as British troops. Specifically, *The Times* omitted any reference to Boxer or Chinese Imperial Army

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[32] Charles Lowe, "The Crisis in China," *The Graphic*, August 4, 1900, Issue 1601, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.
[33] Charles Lowe, "The Crisis in China," *The Graphic*, July 21, 1900, Issue 1599, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.
[34] Robert Coltman Jr., *Beleaguered in Peking*, 48.

success.[35] Instead, alongside sensational rumors and horror stories, newspapers portrayed the Boxers as criminals being brought to justice.[36] By sharing these violent tales, the media depicted the Chinese as frightening and fearsome.

When the media portrayed the Chinese as savage, it stripped from the Chinese the supposed authority and discipline which came with Westernized technology and civility and masculinity. Instead, the media emphasized the strength of the British army who were competing with and defeating these "savage" rebels.[37] Through careful choices of which pictures to publish—pictures of British warships, not the Chinese Imperial Army behind cannons—and through depicting the Boxer rebels as brutal, the media attempted to reaffirm ideas of a robust and respectable empire and China as an uncivilized, barbaric kingdom.

Another way the media attempted to reassert British authority and reaffirm the image of the Chinese as barbarous was to focus on the violence during the war, especially on the violence toward the defenseless bodies of women and children. Coverage of the Boxer Rebellion was very visceral. Books covering the rebellion, such as A. Henry Savage-Landor's two-volume history, showed photographs of bodies floating in the river, Chinese men without legs, heads hanging from poles by their queues [the traditional Manchu hairstyle], and scenes of Boxers being beheaded. Landor's history as well shared disturbing descriptions of European victims. According to Landor, "hundreds have been terribly tortured, burnt alive, massacred; many Europeans, too, in the interior, have suffered atrocious tortures, such as the 'death by the thousand cuts,' and 'the slow

[35] Jane Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilisation*, 40.
[36] Jane Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilisation*, 66.
[37] For a further discussion of the British media's portrayal of Boxer rebels, see Jane Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilisation.*

death'."[38] A book reviewer for *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* wrote of Landor's history: "Very terrible is the account of the treatment received by young English and American girls who went out as missionaries."[39] To stress the brutality and barbarity of the Chinese, Landor emphasized their violence toward women.

Through this emphasis on violence toward women, fears of Chinese changed to, fears of their physical presence. Their masculine bodies and their supposed inability to control these bodies threatened white women. This fear of their physical presence became closely associated with the size of the Chinese population. The media depicted the Boxer Rebellion as a united effort, a rebellion that the Chinese population and leaders supported. In its coverage, the *Birmingham Daily Post* claimed that "all those connected with the Palace, inside as well as outside of it, were Boxers, and everyone, even the princes and nobles, was worshipping the Boxers' god."[40] There was always the emphasis on numbers, on the supposed collective unity of the Chinese. As Sascha Auerbach notes, "the perceived threat of the Chinese to white communities was often based on the imagined potency of their race and the purported coherence of their international community."[41]

With the Boxer Rebellion, and four years later Japan's sound defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, the British and other Western peoples began to fear that Japan and China as both members of the yellow race would combine to counter British control in Asia. The media's focus shifted from Africa—from the clashes with the French in East Africa, the wars with the Asante in Ghana, the conflicts with the Dutch Afrikaners in the

[38] A. Henry Savage-Landor, *China and The Allies*, 20.
[39] *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (London, England), Saturday, June 15, 1901; Issue 2090.
[40] *Birmingham Daily Post*, Friday, July 6, 1900, Issue 13125, http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/.
[41] Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle,"* 3.

Transvaal and the Madhist in the Sudan—to the East. The media emphasized the growing populations of Japan and China. The English author, H. Rider Haggard, made famous and later knighted for his imperial literature, responded to the Japanese defeat of the Russians. In a speech given in 1905 which referenced the then debated Alien Act, he asked the British people to imagine when "'not little Japan but great China, with her 400,000, 000 people, has also made some strides towards civilization… imagine these 400,000,000 of stolid, strong, patient, untiring landbred men having nowhere to live, having not earth upon which to stand, and seeking a home'."[42] Haggard warned his audience that these men "'will simply 'walk through your paper [anti-immigration] law', and trample over your tiny populations 'heaped together in the things these white people call cities' and occupy your vacant territories."[43]

What had started as a semi-clandestine uprising in Shandong Province turned to a concern over the growing populations of China. The local phenomenon of the Boxer Rebellion became an international event, and coverage of the rebellion incited concerns of the Chinese and their capacity to combine resources with other Asian countries to challenge British authority and dominance in East Asia. This focus on the Chinese did not revert back after the Rebellion was squelched. Instead, the Chinese remained in the minds of the British and in the headlines of newspapers. The British used the Boxer Rebellion to draw attention to the mobility of the Chinese across the empire and to the instability of the imperial meanings attached to the "yellow" race.

[42] Quoted in P.J. Waller, "Immigration into Britain: the Chinese" *History Today* 35 (September 1985), 13-14.
[43] P. J. Waller, "Immigration into Britain: the Chinese," 14.

CHAPTER TWO

SODOMITE AND SLAVE: CONTRADICTORY IMAGES OF THE CHINESE IN SOUTH AFRICA

As coolies in the Caribbean, mineworkers in South Africa, settlers in British Columbia and Australia, merchants in Southeast Asia—the Chinese touched almost every area of the British Empire, and as they travelled from country to country, created networks of influence between each place.[1] The movement of the Chinese from Northern China to South Africa connected the Boxer Rebellion to the South African Labor Dispute. In fact of the 45,000 Chinese laborers introduced to South Africa, 97 percent of these came from the northern provinces of China which had been most affected by the Boxer Rebellion.[2] In Northern China, these men were cast as savage Boxers wanting to rape white women and undermine white dominance. In South Africa, they became part of a different sexual discourse.

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[1] For more on Chinese diaspora and transnational labor, Lisa Yun, *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba* (Pittsburg: Temple University Press, 2009); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Washington, D.C.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Christine Suchen Yim, *Hua Song: Stories of the Chinese Diaspora* (Long River Press, 2005); Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora*; Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and China, 1882-1943* (Pasadena, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999); Eric Tagliacozzo, *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); James Francis Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore 1880-1940* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003); Lisa Chow, *Chasing Their Dreams: Chinese Settlement in the Northwest Region of British Columbia* (Caitlin, 2001).

[2] Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential: The Chinese Mine Labourers and 'Unnatural Crime'," *South Africa Historical Journal* 50 (November 2004), 121.

During the election of 1906, the public witnessed sympathetic images of the Chinese being used for slave labor and also heard disturbing stories of their "unnatural" crimes of homosexuality in the mines. In connection with the affairs of South Africa, the media generated concomitant images of the Chinese as both victims and culprits. They were slaves of the British Empire and its quest for capital and raw materials. They were also subjects of a competing empire that had degenerated over time and was now stretching its influence across the globe through exporting laborers.

In 1906, Reverend Alexander Frances and Leopold Luyt reported to the Colonial Office that sexual intimacy between Chinese men in the Witwatersrand compounds in South Africa was widespread, taking place both in private within the compound and in the open field, often in view of European women passing by.[3] According to Frances and Luyt, these allegations of acts of sodomy were "'supported by the prevalence of syphilis in the rectum among Chinese in hospital'."[4] However, the occurrence of homosexual acts and intimacy between Chinese laborers was not the only concern of these British men. They also emphasized that some Chinese were contaminating indigenous Africans through sharing their practices and spreading their venereal diseases.

This supposed teaching of homosexual practices to the indigenous population raised a concern about catamites within the compounds.[5] Though more passive and often the receiver during sex, catamites were viewed by British officials as conduits who actively spread homosexuality. As clients of more powerful and domineering men, their livelihood relied upon their trade—providing sex. However, following the Bucknill

[3] Marc Epprecht, "'Unnatural Vice' in South Africa: The 1907 Commission of Enquiry," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34.1 (2001), 125.
[4] Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential," 129.
[5] Young boys who provided sex to older men in return for protection and provisions.

Report and its investigation, only 131 Chinese men presumed to be catamites were repatriated.

It was not just that Chinese catamites were prostituting themselves and spreading homosexuality to the black Africans. The Chinese men were also forming "mine marriages." In these "marriages," older, more experienced workers took younger boys as "wives" to help with domestic duties and provide companionship. In this way, the mining community was creating its own ideas of domesticity and sexual partnership in a world void of female bodies. It is important to note that no other sexual outlets existed for Chinese mine workers. The British government decided against allowing Chinese women into South Africa because they did not want to create an established competing foreign community within this new colony. Instead, they held contracts with these Chinese men. Once these contracts expired, the coolies were to be repatriated to China.

Because of the British government's decision to forbid Chinese women entrance into South Africa, Chinese men had to choose between celibacy and same-sex intimacy which often involved both sex and household formation. Creating a household and combining expenses decreased the cost of living. Taking young boys as "wives" in the mining compounds allowed men to leave the mines with relatively good health and savings and gave them a space to have sex without the danger of venereal diseases.[6] Though these "mine marriages" were mostly circumstantial choices and these partnerships liminal spaces, nevertheless, this alternative version of domesticity competed with the British ideas of proper sex roles and domestic life. Not allowed to associate with white women nor allowed to bring Chinese women with them to South

[6] Many men did not engage in anal sex and, instead, practiced thigh sex which decreased the outbreak of venereal diseases, Marc Epprecht, "'Unnatural Vice' in South Africa," 128.

Africa, Chinese men were not given the opportunity to act on British values, therefore, these "mine marriages" also constituted an unintentional yet undermining opposition to British values and to the civilizing mission of empire.

Upon receiving this information, the Colonial Office appointed J. A .S. Bucknill, a young magistrate who would later serve as Chief Justice in Singapore, to investigate the allegations of same-sex practices among Chinese coolies in South Africa.[7] At the close of his investigation, the Bucknill Report had found there was misconduct among the coolies which was widespread, open, and scandalous; there were consequently demoralization and disease; this state of things had been tolerated by the police and mine managers; and the natives of Africa were contaminated, both morally and physically.[8] These findings created a heated debate within Parliament about who should be held responsible and how to resolve this issue as quickly and effectively as possible.

Members of Parliament described this situation as grave because of its direct effect upon the mines and "possible indirect effects upon other populations than those of the Chinamen, a very terrible effect which would tarnish the honour and good name not only of England, but of her Colonies."[9] From the beginning, Parliament was concerned about the image this scandal would create of an empire abandoning its morals to increase profits. Concerned about this image, the Lord Bishop of Birmingham stated, "I do not think that any kind of commercial necessity can justify a country in allowing the normal prevalence of that kind of vice in any community."[10] In the case of South Africa, there

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[7] Charles Van Onselen, "Who Killed Meyer Hasenfus? Organized Crime, Policing and Informing on the Witwatersrand, 1902–8," *History Workshop Journal*: 67 (1): 2009, 1-22; "The Assizes," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (1884-1942), 28 May 1914, 7.
[8] Parliamentary Debates,1965 H.L. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov. 1906, 48.
[9] Parliamentary Debates, 1965 H.L. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov 1906, 41.
[10] Parliamentary Debates, 1965 H.L. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov 1906, 46.

was a conflict between the economic necessity of Chinese coolies and the moral panic created by their presence.[11]

For the British, South Africa was a young colony, making this decision between economics and morality more difficult. In 1902, Britain had just solidified control of South Africa by defeating the Afrikaaners and indigenous populations which fought on the side of the Afrikaaners. With the end of the Second Boer War, South Africa was a newly solidified area of control. Those living in South Africa were now under the tutelage of the British Empire, and their futures intertwined. In order to strengthen the economic situation in South Africa (weakened by the cost of war and the establishment of a new governing system) and as a way to lessen the costly reliance upon indigenous African laborers, the British decided to introduce cheap and dependable Chinese labor to South Africa.

While logistically it was more expensive to introduce foreign labor to a colony which already had a possible labor force, indigenous African laborers were likely to leave the mines and return to their families, making it necessary to hire and train new workers regularly, a costly undertaking.[12] It was only the general stagnation of the country and the restriction of other fields of employment which brought the black South Africans to temporarily work in the mines, thus as the 1905 Transvaal Chamber of Mines Report found, "they [couldn't] be reckoned upon as a permanent factor in the unskilled labor

[11] Stanley Cohen in his work, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972), coined the term "moral panic" to describe a time when a topic, event, person, or group of persons emerge to become defined as a threat to societal values.

[12] To read more on the necessity of using Chinese labor and the recruitment of these workers, see Peter Richardson, "The Recruiting of Chinese Indentured Labour for the South African Gold-Mines, 1903–1908," *The Journal of African History* 18 (1977).

supply."[13]

In 1904, A. J. Strong, a British working man, wrote a letter to his fellow working men detailing why the Chinese were necessary in South Africa. According to Strong, during the Boer War the native populations made enormous sums of money, and thousands of them were still living on this money and not needing to work.[14] As well, now that the colony was under British control, there was an increase in infrastructure. This increase in infrastructure created jobs for the native populations, and thousands were employed on the railways.[15] Also, as Strong describes, "the great difficulty with these boys (as we call them) is that they will not stay longer than six months without going home to their kraals as soon as their time is up (six months)."[16] The Chinese, not having homes and wives to return to and not speaking any of the native languages, were less likely to wander away from the mines. Despite these advantages of bringing in Chinese workers—a stable and reliable labor force at a cheap rate—the decision was controversial.[17] The Liberal Party claimed that the use of Chinese coolies in South Africa was a form of slavery and that the British government was abandoning their morals for money. [18] This issue of Chinese labor provided a platform for the Liberal-Unionist anti-imperial cry, and on the streets and at Liberal meetings, people could see images of

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[13] *Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 16th Annual Report* (Johannesburg: The Argus Printing and Publishing Co., 1906), 47.
[14] Though Strong claims this as a reason for needing Chinese labor, he gives no reasoning for how the native populations made this money.
[15] A. J. Strong, Imperial South African Association (Series), no. 70; South Africa, the War of 1899-1902 and the Chinese Labour question ; reel 8.; South Africa, the War of 1899-1902 and the Chinese Labour question., Chinese Labour in the Transvaal Mines, 2.
[16] A. J. Strong, "The Chinese Labour Question," 2.
[17] To read more on the debate over Chinese labor, see Tu T. Huynh, "From Demand for Asiatic Labor to Importation of Indentured Chinese Labor: Race Identity in the Recruitment of Unskilled Labor for South Africa's Gold Mining Industry, 1903–1910," in *Journal of Chinese Overseas 4*.1 (May 2008), 51-68.
[18] The *Morning Post* on January 22nd wrote, "The Liberals … have made Chinese Labour their first weapon of attack [and] from all parts of the country comes information that the 'slavery' cry has accounted for the defeat of the Unionist candidates." Quoted in A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide: The General Election of 1906* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973), 177.

pigtailed and manacled Chinese men.[19]

To quell these cries of slavery and inhumanity toward Chinese coolies in South Africa, the British created labor contracts in agreement with the Chinese government and founded a department of foreign labor to manage the laborers coming into the mines and to provide inspectors who would monitor the conditions and treatment of the workers. The department also set rules for recruitment and provided facilities for medical and sanitary needs.[20] Through these contracts with the Chinese government, the British attempted to create an image of one amiable empire working with another, no signs of a master of commerce using colonial tactics. Lord Balfour went so far as to claim "the South African compound system was compatible with freedom."[21] It is debatable that the treatment of these Chinese laborers matched the claims of these contracts.[22] According to Gary Kynoch's research, "for the duration of their three-year contracts, Chinese labourers were housed in a single-sex, prison-like environment, in which corrupt Chinese mine police wielded an inordinate amount of authority."[23] Thus, though the sympathetic language of the Liberal Party may have initially been a ploy of politics, it was nonetheless a legitimate claim.

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[19] The Liberal-Unionist was a branch of the Liberal party which created a political alliance with the Conservative Party over opposition of Irish Home Rule but also supported free trade. A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide*, 106.

[20] Quoted in Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential: The Chinese Mine Labourers and 'Unnatural Crime'," *South African Historical Journal* 50 (November 2004): 76-77. For more on the responsibilities of the FLD, see Gary Kynoch "'Your Petitioners Are in Mortal Terror': The Violent World of Chinese Mineworkers in South Africa, 1904-1910," *Journal of South African Studies* 31.3 (September 2005).

[21] A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide*, 107.

[22] For examples of such mistreatment, see Karen Harris, 115-133. As well, see Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Marginal Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860*-1910 (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992); Gary Kynoch "'Your Petitioners Are in Mortal Terror': The Violent World of Chinese Mineworkers in South Africa, 1904-1910," *Journal of South African Studies* 31.3 (September 2005).

[23] Gary Kynoch, "'Your Petitioners Are in Mortal Terror'," 546.

Regardless of the controversy around giving work to Chinese coolies instead of white workers—workers who as A. J. Strong argued would be too costly to employ—in the end, the Tories prevailed in bringing in Chinese coolies for the Transvaal mines, and from 1904 to 1907, more than 63,000 Chinese men came to South Africa.[24] However, the Liberal Party used the controversies over these Chinese laborers' "unnatural crimes" to secure a landslide victory in 1906.[25]

With the controversy surrounding the use of Chinese coolies, it was important that South Africa profit economically from this arrangement. Any crick in the system would reflect poorly for the Conservative Party and affect their chances at winning in the General Election of 1906. For this reason, it was most important that Chinese coolies only bring profits to South Africa rather than what the West deemed strange Eastern customs. One of these supposedly differing customs was sexual practices. Even before the arrival of Chinese coolies in South Africa, the British believed the East to be a decadent society, debauched and depraved in their sexual predilections.[26] Thus, when these allegations from missionaries surfaced, they confirmed prior British beliefs about Eastern behavior. In a report to the Earl of Elgin, Governor Selborne explained the situation in South Africa as "no doubt due to the different standard of morality which prevails among Western nations from that which prevails among certain Eastern races, of which the Northern Chinese are one."[27] In a separate incident, when explaining the presence of homosexual acts in South Africa, a British magistrate said, "I dare say it is an

[24] Gary Kynoch, "'Your Petitioners Are in Mortal Terror'," 531.
[25] Karen Harris, 33. For more on the use of images of slavery and Chinese men and their influence on politics, see Graham Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 107.
[26] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[27] Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential," 132.

Eastern habit… This thing comes from the East."[28]

The belief that Chinese coolies were teaching the African laborers homosexual behavior transformed South Africa into a liminal space between the East and West, between Britain and China. Crucial to this were supposedly differing ideas about proper sex and as Governor Selbourne explained a "different standard of morality."[29] Parliamentary debates voiced that Chinese sexual acts did not accord with the standards that the British had set for themselves and for their colonies. The Chinese too supplied South Africa with a working population that appeared to be the opposite of the native Africans. Unlike Africans, Chinese were believed to be effeminate, less violent, and ultimately easier to control.

However, the British found that Eastern decadence and sexual preferences were difficult to control and in South Africa were coming in conflict with British standards of decency. As a Member of Parliament noted, Chinese were "brought here from afar into a white man's country, or at all events, into a country inhabited according to a white man's code."[30] When the Chinese broke this code and supposedly introduced sodomy to South Africa, the stability of the colony was questioned, the civilizing mission contested, and the British moral influence in this new colony challenged.

This breaking of the British code of sexuality pitted the British and Chinese against each other in influence upon the native population of South Africa. Picking out the importance of South Africa and its new formalized relationship with Britain, Lord Bishop of Birmingham noted that this vice was possibly influencing "a young and yet

[28] Marc Epprecht, "'Unnatural Vice' in South Africa," 130.
[29] Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential," 132.
[30] Parliamentary Debates, 1965 H.C. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov. 1906, 198. Emphasis added.

unformed community."[31] He continued by explaining that this state of morality, or lack of morality "not only means that there is something foul in itself in the midst of the community but it also means that it spreads contamination around."[32] Those in Parliament emphasized that this sexual behavior of the Chinese contaminated the native population by instructing Africans on how to commit homosexual acts. As Churchill explained, "the consequence of them [the Chinese] had been the demoralization of the white population and contamination of the native population."[33]

Parliament's concern was about the contamination of the native population. Parliament was attempting to protect this new colony, this new space for profit. However, knowledge "of the 'crime of sodomy' was widespread in the mine compounds even prior to the introduction of the Chinese."[34] In a memo from Governor-General Lord Selbourne to Earl Elgin, he wrote, "So far as the vice prevails at all among the Kaffirs, its prevalence is due to the fact that some of the Portuguese have the Eastern, rather than the Western view of this matter. There is no evidence whatever that they have been contaminated by the Chinese."[35] According to their work placement, the Chinese and black South Africans did not interact often. As stated in the 1905 Transvaal Chamber of Mines Report, the natives have always preferred surface work, and "have only come to the mines when no other employment was available" while the great majority of Chinese labourers worked underground "with just over 50,000 indentured workers employed in the mines in 1906, less than 2,000 worked on the surface as sweepers and cleaners (578),

[31] Parliamentary Debates, 1965 H.L. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov. 1906, 45.
[32] Parliamentary Debates, 1965 H.L. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov. 1906, 45.
[33] Parliamentary Debates, 1965 H.C. Deb. 4s. 15 Nov. 1906, 202.
[34] Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential," 128.
[35] Marc Epprecht, "'Unnatural Vice' in South Africa," 126.

police (532), cooks (404), and in various other capacities.[36]

Furthermore, it was believed the Chinese would not stoop to have sex with the Africans. A European report in 1906 claimed that the "South African natives have little or nothing left to learn in the direction of vice… [and they did] not believe that our 'black brother' is likely to deteriorate to any further extent either morally or physically merely on account of meeting the Chinese."[37] Why then the timing of this panic over the Chinese presence and the possibility of their sharing these sexual practices with the natives, if the British believed that the natives already practiced these sexual habits?

1906 was not only the year of the Bucknill Report but also a crucial year for parliamentary elections. At the end of the nineteenth century, Conservatives firmly held power and firmly supported empire. However, the years immediately prior to the 1906 election were not good years for empire. During the Boer War, the concentration camps in the Transvaal had attracted a great deal of unfavorable attention.[38] As well, British officials and writers were beginning to investigate and uncover the horrors of the Belgian Congo.[39] Also, the sensationalized stories from the Boxer Rebellion—tales of European women impaled or beheaded, their heads swinging in cages, their bodies left swollen and ripped open and seen floating down rivers—still greatly influenced people's opinions of the Chinese. [40] The recent actions of the British Empire, while under the helm of a

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[36] *Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 16th Annual Report,* 47; Gary Kynoch, "'Your Petitioners Are in Moral Terror'," 534.
[37] Karen Harris, "Private and Confidential," 131.
[38] See Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32-79.
[39] Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* first published in 1902; in 1904, Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness Edmund Dene Morel, and Roger Casement founded the Congo Reform Association. For more information on British involvement in Congo Reform, see Hunter Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement," *Journal of Modern Literature* 9.1 (1981-1982).
[40] A. Henry Savage-Landor, *China and The Allies*, Vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 66, 254. For more examples of sensationalized stories of the Boxer Rebellion, see Robert Coltman Jr.,

Conservative government, resembled some of the much criticized and publicized behavior of supposedly uncivilized people.

Members of the Liberal Party voiced their dissent against these atrocities of empire or atrocities caused by the expansion of empire. To many Liberals, the methods used for empire conflicted with the civilizing mission supposedly working within colonies. The concentration camps of the Boer War and the indentured labor of Chinese coolies after the war were both examples of uncivilized behavior. As well, the importing of Chinese labor to South Africa did not make sense when there were plenty of British men looking for work. Was not the empire meant to support the metropole? In that case, the gold mines of South Africa should be spaces of employment for the British working-class in need of jobs.[41] In the mind of the Liberal Party, using the Chinese as slave labor reflected poorly upon the British Empire, and the presence of a large group of Chinese men without any women created a moral dilemma. As well, the Yellow Peril hysteria of the Boxer Rebellion remained a concern for many British subjects.

As Ross Forman writes, "potentially explosive questions of sexual conduct only attract widespread interest when they can be exploited for broader purposes."[42] The moral panic over Chinese homosexuality in South Africa served to help to defeat the Tory party in the 1906 election and to turn the image of the Chinese from an economic threat to a moral concern. Once a Member of Parliament leaked the findings of Bucknill's Report to the public, it served as a focal point for anti-Chinese sentiment and as compelling grounds for those who wished to have Chinese in South Africa repatriated and Chinese in

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Beleaguered in Peking (Philadelphia, PA: Davis Company, Publishers, 1901); Ross G. Forman, "Peking Plots: Fictionalizing the Boxer Rebellion of 1900," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27.1 (1999).

[41] For more on this debate, see A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide*.

[42] Ross G. Forman, "Randy on the Rand: Portuguese African Labor and the Discourse on "Unnatural Vice" in the Transvaal in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11.4 (2002): 572.

England closely examined.

Shortly after Bucknill's Report, there was another inquiry into homosexual acts in South Africa, but the 1907 inquiry of South African natives did not receive the same level of public attention as the inquiry into Chinese coolies. As Forman argues, there were specific reasons why Bucknill's Report of 1906 garnered greater attention than the 1907 Commission of Enquiry.[43] According to Forman, in the 1907 inquiry, there were "no allegations (as there had been about the Chinese) that black Africans were having sexual relations in fields and other areas visible to the public at large."[44] While black Africans were known to engage in sex labeled as sodomy, by not having sex in visible areas, they did not offend public morality and did not raise public concern.

Not only did the 1906 Election greatly influence the situation in South Africa, but also the relationship between China and Britain heavily influenced the treatment of Chinese coolies in South Africa. After the Opium War, the Qing Empire was declining in power and gradually losing sovereignty to Western Powers encroaching on its borders and in its port cities. The hysteria created by the fears of homosexuality among Chinese coolies helped to cement the image of an empire dwindling in power due to degeneration. With the invasion scares during the Edwardian period and the most recent fears stemming from the Boxer Rebellion, it was necessary to affirm this image of a crumbling China.[45]

As well, in comparison to Africans, the Chinese were much higher on the ladder of legitimate/favored races, thus "the former's presumed sexual deviance was more aberrant and abhorrent and had more potential to harm white cultures because of its aura

[43] This inquiry is reviewed by both Ross G. Forman, "Randy on the Rand," and Marc Epprecht, "'Unnatural Vice' in South Africa."
[44] Ross G. Forman, "Randy on the Rand," 592.
[45] See invasion novels such as M.P. Shiel's *Yellow Danger* and reviews of invasion novels in Ross G. Forman's "Peking Plots."

of effeminacy."[46] In short, black South Africans were not viewed as a threat, the Chinese were. They were a threat culturally because of their higher status on the racial ladder, their supposed proximity to British civilization; economically, through their necessary involvement in the British Empire; and numerically, through the sheer numbers of Chinese people in the world.[47] In South Africa, the Chinese mineworkers were comparable to having a small foreign army to control. The 1905 Transvaal Chamber of Mines Report described a mine manager as being in a difficult position because he "had a number of Chinese under him, in some cases numerically almost equal to a brigade of infantry."[48]

It must be noted that China was not an "official" space of empire for Britain. They were not colonials in the same way as the South Africans but foreigners, subjects of a competing empire. Thus, as Ross Forman notes, the heightened interest and anxiety over the Bucknill Report signals the anxiety over the instability of imperial borders, whether these boundaries be sexual or geographic in nature."[49] As subjects of a rival empire and participants in homosexual acts with the indigenous natives, these Chinese coolies challenged British stability and British masculinity and allegiance to heterosexual conventions. As Christopher Lane proposes, "sexual desire between men frequently ruptured Britain's imperial allegory by shattering national unity and impeding the entire defeat of subject groups."[50] The presence of these morally depraved Chinese coolies contaminated the white Anglo-Saxon colonial conquest of South Africa by interfering with the morality of Britain's African subjects. In addition, British officials shared the

[46] Ross G. Forman, "Randy on the Rand," 592-593.
[47] Consider the Yellow Peril language of the Chinese as hordes, masses, crowds, swarms.
[48] *Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 16th Annual Report*, 53.
[49] Ross G. Forman, "Randy on the Rand," 605.
[50] Christopher Lane, *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 4.

Victorian opinion that homosexuality was contagious and "spread among men who lacked 'legitimate' heterosexual opportunities."[51] South Africa being a colonial space with limited numbers of white women, the entire population of South Africa, both black and white, was susceptible.

In South Africa, the British made a private practice into a public issue because the British viewed Chinese coolies as dangerous to the stability of empire, to white heteronormative sexuality and domesticity. As a competing empire and influence upon the black South Africans, some British imagined the Chinese as contaminants to British culture and codes of conduct. As a colonized group being taken advantage of by the British Empire, the Chinese were viewed as slaves of empire who deserved sympathy and a voice in their own plight. Though the Liberals and Tories may not have agreed on whether Chinese coolies were exploited workers or contaminating coolies, they could agree on their disgust and disapproval of Chinese supposedly aberrant sexualities. While questions of labor and economics were often difficult to agree upon, questions of morality were more easily settled. Both political groups could agree upon taking this local phenomenon into international politics and using the Chinese as a tool to match their political needs.

[51] Marc Epprecht, "'Unnatural Vice' in South Africa, 126.

CHAPTER THREE

SAILORS, LAUNDERERS, SEDUCERS: IMAGES OF CHINESE MEN IN THE METROPOLE

The print media played a crucial part in connecting the stereotypes and thoughts of subjects within England and colonial peoples across the globe. Illustrated newspapers helped English readers at home to imagine and to see the supposed brutality of the Boxer Rebellion.[1] Newspaper coverage of the labor disputes of South Africa and issues of the 1906 election incited interest in coolie labor and opinions on the Chinese, whether this was a critical opinion of the homosexuality scandal or a sympathetic opinion of coolies being treated as slave labor.

In England, workers formed large processions to protest Chinese labor being used in South Africa. In Liverpool, James Larkin, the General Organizer for the National Union of Dock Labourers organized a gigantic procession against Chinese labor on the Rand. These processions incited interest and generated publicity. As P. J. Waller writes, because of the publicity generated by Larkin's march in Liverpool, copy-cat parades sprang up around England, and "elaborately staged parades of pig-tailed and manacled Chinamen being flogged in slave-drives were commonplace."[2] The publicity created by newspapers allowed for people to draw more connections between England and its

[1] See James Hevia, *English Lessons*, 187.
[2] P.J. Waller, "Immigration into Britain," 14.

empire. At a pub in Liverpool, two men could debate the labor situation in South Africa, read from the newspaper of Chinese coolies there, and turn the conversation to the Chinese laundry owner who lived down the street.

The labor tensions in South Africa alerted workers in Britain that they too should be concerned about the cheap and reliable labor of the "Chinaman". Newspapers recognized this interest in the affairs of empire and, wanting to sell papers, took advantage of these labor tensions, often printing stories detailing disturbances at the West India Docks involving Chinese men. As well, these stories often provided detailed personal characteristics of Chinese men which implied they were unreliable, un-British workers—bribery, gambling, opium, violence. This public interest in the Chinese eventually turned to an interest in their private lives and relationships with white women, and the conversations about Chinese men—similar to the labor debates of South Africa—turned from an economic to a sexual and moral critique.

Similar to the situation in South Africa, the British did not want Chinese men to bring Chinese women to England. The British believed if the Chinese brought wives with them they would become more domestic and less of a transitory group. Instead, with no Chinese women to wed, Chinese men began marrying white women. The British media emphasized these relationships with white women and portrayed Chinese men as predatory toward British women, especially young and impressionable girls.[3] These critiques created concerns of Chinese men's sexuality and morality, no doubt influenced

[3] It should be noted that the majority of the newspaper sources I use are newspapers of the West End with a heavy middleclass readership.

by the homosexuality scandal in South Africa and yellow peril plots of Chinese men preying on white women.[4]

When small British communities held these concerns, they pressured the government to arrange investigations into the Chinese communities in their cities. In Liverpool, the Liverpool Trades Council advised the city council to "strictly enforce all sanitary and other regulations."[5] These were the days of cleanliness being next to godliness, and by using the language of "sanitation and other regulations," the trades council implied that the Chinese were breaking laws of purity and laws of morality.[6] However, in the case of Liverpool, the investigation found these claims of immorality and claims of Chinese men taking advantage of white women unfounded. After the commission of inquiry, the chief constable found no cause for concern of the Chinese population and added that he believed the disdain for the Chinese came from the competition they brought to British businesses.

Newspapers often printed negative portrayals of Chinese men and of their private relationships, and by doing so, turned the conversation and critique about the Chinese away from economics and toward sexual and moral affairs. While sharing stories of sexual and moral scandal incited more interest from the British public, government

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[4] For more on such yellow peril plots, see Gary Hoppenstand, "Yellow Devil Doctors and Opium Dens: The Yellow Peril Stereotype in Mass Media Entertainment," in *Popular Culture: An Introductory Text*, edited by John G. Nachbar, Kevin Lausé (Bowling Green, OH : Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992); Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril" Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

[5] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain 1860-1914," in *Immigrants and. Minorities in British Society*, edited by C. Holmes (Allen and Unwin, London, 1978), 115.

[6] For more on links between purity and hygiene, see Louise A. Jackson "'Singing Birds as well as Soap Suds': The Salvation Army's Work with Sexually Abused Girls in Edwardian England" *Gender & History* 12.1 (2000); in the context of Ireland and the Catholic Church, see James M. Smith, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment (*Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), http://muse.jhu.edu/ (accessed April 28, 2012); B. Titley "Heil Mary: Magdalen Asylums and Moral Regulation in Ireland," *History of Education Review* 35.2 (2004).

investigations did not endorse these complaints and fears. Though historians have used the sensationalized newspapers' coverage of the early twentieth century to support the argument that the British public consistently viewed the Chinese as dangerous and threatening, some of the newspaper coverage was merely sensational. These government reports and evidence of white women marrying Chinese men indicate that other opinions of the Chinese existed outside of print media.

Sailors

In the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese men living in concession ports such as Tianjin and Shanghai or the colonies of Hong Kong and Singapore took advantage of the opportunities for work within the empire and found work on British ships. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Qing government was growing more and more unstable, and jobs with the British merchant marine offered work as well as an escape from the political turmoil and economic crisis within China. Until 1905, in England, there were no immigration laws, making it relatively easy for these Chinese seamen to dock in a British port and decide to stay.[7] These increasing numbers of Chinese men deciding to settle in London made the community more visible.

Most Chinese men deciding to stay in London moved to the East End, the area of London with a distinct history of being a space for refugees and immigrants. In 1685, when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and politically pressured Huguenots to leave France or reconvert to Catholicism, they crossed the English Channel and settled in

[7] In 1905, British Parliament passed the Aliens Act, the first law with the purpose of restricting and controlling immigration. The act also set up protocol for deporting criminals and unskilled immigrants who slow down impeded British progress.

the East End, developing the silk industry in Spitalfields, setting up schools, and working as merchants.[8] Beginning in the eighteenth century, Irish began moving into the East End to find work and better wages. In the nineteenth century during the high time of empire, the docks of the East End were "crossroads of people, things, and attitudes, a nexus of empire."[9] British subjects boarded ships to visit British colonies. Colonial peoples entered London for work and colonial commodities entered London for purchase. Whether escaping religious or political persecution or seeking economic opportunities, Lithuanians, Catholic Poles, Jews from Eastern Europe, Italians, Germans, Africans, Indians, Malaysians, Chinese—they all found a space in the East End though, as Jonathan Schneer writes, "not always happily so."[10] Though these ethnic groups shared spaces in the East End, they tended to self-segregate as a means of self-preservation and ease. The Chinese moved into Pennyfields, Poplar, and Limehouse for the low-cost housing available and proximity to the docks where most Chinese men worked.

In the beginning, employers admired these Chinese workers. As W.H. Smith, the famous British owner of book retail stores, wrote when he visited the railway stations in San Francisco in 1872: "my ideas about the Chinese are greatly changed. They are a remarkably quiet, steady, hard-working body of men."[11] Within the British working classes, this docility provoked resentment with British workers. British workers viewed this growing Chinese work force as dangerous because they were cheap and compliant. Their willingness to work for lower wages often undercut male labor in England. Also, due to China's large population, there were always numbers of Chinese men available to

[8] Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (London: MacMillan Education LTD, 1988), 7.
[9] Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 39.
[10] Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900*, 8.
[11] P. J. Waller, "Immigration into Britain," 14.

work. This wide availability of unskilled laborers needing work and willing to accept lower wages was similar to that of Jews coming from Eastern Europe in the 1800s who accepted poorly paid jobs in the tailoring and textile industries.[12] Both the Jews and the Chinese were reliable work forces with enough men to fill seats in factories and spots on ships. However, this willingness to accept lower wages angered white working class men who believed the textile and shipping industries were filling skilled and semi-skilled positions with unskilled immigrant laborers to cut manufacturing costs.

With the Merchant Shipping Act of 1906, the government tried to address some of the fears of British working class men. The Merchant Shipping Act required that foreign seamen working on British vessels must be able to speak and understand English. Also, trying to cut back on the inexperienced foreign sailors inducted into the merchant marine, the act required that "no able seaman should be engaged unless he was able to prove at the time of his engagement that he had served at least for three years before the mast or in the capacity of seaman."[13] This portion of the act addressed the concerns of many British seamen that the Chinese were cheap, reliable, but inexperienced labor. The *Cardiff Maritime Review* put to words the complaints of seamen: "'You know, we know and they know, that the Chinaman isn't worth a toss as a seaman; that his only claim to indulgence is that he is cheap."[14] After the government's attempt to address these problems, they still continued. Chinese sailors would claim Hong Kong as home. Hong Kong being a British colony, the sailors being British subjects, the foreign language test became unnecessary.[15] Despite its intentions, the Merchant Shipping Act did not resolve much, and British

[12] See Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
[13] House of Commons, "Chinese on British Ships," *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3 March 1908, vol. 185 (1908), col. 618.
[14] Quoted in J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 116.
[15] Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, 53.

seamen's frustrations about the Chinese being cheap and unskilled labor remained.

Particular politicians and newspapers supported these attitudes toward Chinese seaman living in England. The official journal of the seamen's union, *The Seaman*, kept a continuous attack upon the Chinese until 1909 when it stopped publication.[16] In speeches and interviews for newspapers, Joseph Havelock Wilson, Liberal representative for Middlesbrough and also president of the seamen union, made assertions that "Chinese immigrants were active, willing agents in the demoralization of white communities and in the marginalization of 'white labour'."[17] *The Times* covered one of Wilson's speeches at the West India Dock, a speech in which he criticized the government for being a "damned hypocrisy."[18] According to Wilson, the government made "such a howl about the Chinese in South Africa, and yet [allowed] the Chinese to be dumped down right here in this country."[19] He then called for 200,000 seamen to paralyze the shipping industry by striking.

These calls by politicians such as Wilson to "take a fortnight's rest" incited major strikes, most notably the strike in Cardiff in 1911 and in Liverpool in 1919.[20] On a smaller scale, sailors picketed vessels thought to hire Chinese crews. In 1908, in Pennyfields, the master of the *HMS Zambezi* attempted to sign on a Chinese crew. However, an intimidating crowd of 200 to 300 men demonstrated against these Chinese men. Under pressure from the angry crowd, the master of the ship decided to hire an English crew instead.[21] At the time of the 1911 sailor's strike in Cardiff, only 3 percent of

[16] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 115.
[17] Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and* "*The Chinese Puzzle*," 16.
[18] "Chinese Labour in England," *The Times*, July 18, 1910.
[19] "Chinese Labour in England," *The Times*, July 18, 1910.
[20] "Chinese Labour in England," *The Times*, July 18, 1910. See J. P. May for Cardiff and Laura Tabili for Liverpool.
[21] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 109.

foreign sailors were Chinese.[22] The media's emphasis on the supposed threat of Chinese sailors incited reactions, which were disproportionate to the number of Chinese sailors working on British ships.[23]

Those who attacked the use of Chinese men as sailors and who supported the Merchant Shipping Act of 1906 and Aliens Act of 1905 argued that this issue of immigration must be addressed before Chinese men settled permanently in Great Britain and disrupted British labor. *The Times* on November 22, 1878 predicted the rise of Chinese settlements and asserted, "we shall see arise in the cities of Europe Chinese quarters which will cause discontent among our working classes, with whom they will have to seriously reckon, and the Chinese will end by fixing themselves among us like the Jews."[24] The increasing numbers of Chinese in the census gave some credence to these fears and *The Times'* prediction.

Launderers

London's 1871 census recorded the Chinese population as 207. The 1921 census recorded 1,319.[25] In comparison, the census of 1911 recording 99,263 Jews. Though these figures are small, the media treated Jews and the Chinese in similar ways.[26] Both groups were populations marked by contradictory images—industrious capitalists and

[22] David Parker, "Chinese People in Britain: Histories, Futures, and Identities," in *The Chinese in Western Europe*, edited by Gregor Benton and Frank N. Pieke (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 71.
[23] For more on the disproportionate concern over the Chinese, see Sascha Auerbach's introduction.
[24] David Parker, "Chinese People in Britain," 70.
[25] Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, 32.
[26] See Lloyd P. Gartner, "Notes on the Statistics of Jewish Immigration to England, 1871-1914," *Jewish Social Studies* 22.2 (April 1960): 97-102.

undesired immigrants.[27] The Chinese along with Jews and other peoples from Eastern Europe were part of the larger movement toward a multiethnic London. The media drew attention to these increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants moving into London. In 1916, a journalist for *The Times* describes what he calls "the Chinese colony":

> In the Limehouse district of London, where the Chinaman stays when he is on shore, it was stated yesterday that during the last year or two the Chinese population has certainly increased. Their lodging-houses have spread from Limehouse-causeway and Pennyfields into other streets, and those who see most of the comings and goings of the men who stay at these places say that the invasion is becoming serious.[28]

This reporter chose to use language associated with both disease and warfare. "Spread" and "invasion"—these words implied that a foreign element was penetrating or infecting a body or a nation. Diseases spread, and, according to this reporter, so did Chinese lodging houses. The image of lodging-houses spreading through Limehouse and Pennyfields suggested contamination. Like flooded sewage waters moving down the street and polluting city property and people's possessions, the Chinese purportedly tainted all things they touched. According to their proximity to the Chinese, people and places became unclean. Together, this language of contamination and penetration hinted at the sexual and moral concerns of the Chinese.[29] The Chinese community was almost exclusively male. While the media used this fact to create a sexual and moral critique of the Chinese—as suggested in the language used in the above-referenced *Times* report—the primary concern was economic.

This growing population of an almost exclusively male Chinese community

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[27] For an argument on how Jews were marked by contradictory imaginings, see Eitan Bar-Yosef, Nadia Valman, *'The Jew' in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[28] "Chinese in London," *The Times*, Monday, September 11, 1916.

[29] Similar rhetoric was used for prostitution. See Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Judith Walkowitcz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society : Women, Class, and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

placed Chinese men in direct competition with British workers for jobs. Moreover, many of these Chinese men, who had not found a British woman to marry, did not have families to provide for. Unlike most British workers, the Chinese did not need a wage that would provide for a household. As immigrants, they were prepared to work for a fraction of the wages paid to Western labor.[30]

Once Chinese men decided to give up the sailing life and settle in Britain, they moved into new professions. Most Chinese immigrants came from the coastal areas of Southern China, areas where farming and fishing were standard trades. Once they relocated to British cities, many Chinese men moved away from these seasonal jobs to more steady work.[31] Chinese tended to take the unwanted jobs of society. They were employed in British households, and there, they performed domestic duties and developed household skills such as washing and ironing. This over time transferred to Chinese men opening and managing laundries.

The Liverpool Trades Council in 1891 said that Chinese laundries were "springing up like mushrooms," and by 1906, in Liverpool and Birkenhead, there were 63 laundries.[32] With the shop on the bottom floor and the family area above, laundries allowed Chinese men to keep their livelihood and family in the same place. The laundry was a family business, and the heavy emphasis on family business made Chinese laundries more competitive than British-owned laundries. As well, in the laundry business the need to communicate with clientele was minimal, and "capital outlay, also, would be fairly low since the basic requirements consisted chiefly of washtubs and irons,

[30] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 113.
[31] For a map showing the areas from which the largest numbers of Chinese immigrants came, see Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians* (Birkenhead: Liver Press, 1989), 99.
[32] PJ Waller, "Immigration into Britain," 2.

along with soap, starch and room to dry washing."[33] These factors combined to make laundries a practical and predominant profession among Chinese in Britain.

In England at the time, these unwanted domestic jobs often supplied supplementary income for working mothers or widows. As George Sala, a longtime social reporter for the *Illustrated London News* and foreign correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, in 1883 asked, "Are Betsy Jane the cook and Sarah Ann the housemaid to be ousted by the yellow men with the pig-tails who cook so cleverly, make beds so neatly and scrub floors so conscientiously; while Mrs. Tearall, the washerwoman is ousted from her tub by Ah Sing, the laundryman from Canton."[34] British historians have noted how Chinese laundries were especially injurious to the working class because they displaced women's work, widows or wives who washed clothes to supplement their income.[35]

However, if laundries were family-run businesses and there were no Chinese women to marry, these families-run businesses were families of Chinese men and white women. White women were not being ousted out of laundry jobs. Instead, they were marrying Chinese men and working in these family-run laundries. In this case, Chinese men's taking supplementary income from some working mothers or widows was not the only problem. Chinese men were also marrying white women and becoming small businessmen. These family-run laundries indicated that Chinese men were assimilating into British society. Though these laundries through miscegenation were spaces of sexual and moral concern, the predominant grievances against laundries continued to be mostly economic.

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[33] Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 28.
[34] George Sala, *Living London* (London: Remington & Co., 1883), 425.
[35] P. J. Waller, "Immigration into Britain," 9.

Laundries, much like the merchant marine, were a target of British resentment toward Chinese workers, and this resentment became most evident through workers' strikes. In Cardiff, in July 1911, during the workers' strikes, Chinese laundries were targeted, and all thirty of them destroyed. As well in the race riots of 1919, strikers destroyed all of the Chinese laundries of Liverpool.[36] The British working class believed that Chinese moving into Britain and establishing laundry shops threatened their livelihood, and they reacted.

In 1906, the Immigration Board decided to send thirty two immigrants to Liverpool. A petition protesting this relocation received 3,000 signatures. Mr. Tudor, a British subject in the laundry business, when interviewed by the *Weekly Courier* stated, "'we who are engaged in the laundry business are being literally driven out of it by the crowds of Chinamen who are coming into the city. To my own personal knowledge, over 30 laundry women… are now in Brownlow Hill Workhouse, living on the parish. And they have been sent there by the Chinese'."[37] Mr. Tudor did not stop after mentioning the Chinese economic competition but additionally argued, "Chinese morality would have an adverse effect on the local community and that women and children were endangered by the presence of Chinese men on the city's streets."[38] Much like Mr. Tudor's comments, newspaper reports often interweaved economic, sexual, and moral fears, thus compounding the supposed threat of the Chinese.[39] The *Daily Telegraph* and *Weekly Courier*'s reports of public resentment of Chinese immigrants received such attention by the public that the Liverpool City Council appointed a Commission of Inquiry to

[36] PJ Waller, "Immigration into Britain," 2.
[37] *Weekly Courier*, January 12, 1906.
[38] Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 62.
[39] Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, 111-112.

investigate these public concerns of Chinese men not observing moral and sanitary regulations.[40] Though the underlying cause of frustration with the Chinese community was economic, this commission of inquiry, which will be discussed later, focused on the supposed immorality of the Chinese—their habits of gambling, opium smoking, and relationships with white women.

Seducers

These communities of working Chinese were noticeable to the public because the Chinese tended not to assimilate. Or more so the newspapers focused on these communities of Chinese who did not assimilate because sharing stories of Chinese who had assimilated implied miscegenation. According to the representation of Chinese men in newspapers, they grouped into ethnic groups, often people from same provinces in China settled together: those from Shanghai settled in Pennyfields and Poplar, those from Canton and southern China settled in Limehouse. In London and other major port cities along the coast, these isolated Chinese communities emerged. The English people feared that this isolation denoted that their political allegiance and financial obligations would always be to China. As Sascha Auerbach points out, "if the disparate communities of Chinese living among white Britons were still bound to one another and to China through nefarious ties, could any Chinese person anywhere ever be trusted?"[41]

Again, this was not a situation distinct to the Chinese. The British had similar concerns about Jewish populations. The British believed Jews to be nefarious and untrustworthy because of their association with anarchy and socialism. However, that the

[40] See Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 62.
[41] Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle"*, 72.

Chinese belonged to a competing and at some times hostile country was distinct. The Chinese belonged to a government which had recently warred with the Western world, and the British public had concerns that Chinese subjects would never be loyal and could never be trusted. [42] As well, in the opinion of Yellow Peril, the Chinese belonged to a massive Asian population capable of uniting and besieging the Western world.

Recognizing this foreign element, the English media emphasized the supposedly abnormal and un-British behavior of Chinese. This included their isolationist tendencies, their difficulty in speaking English, and their habits of opium smoking and gambling. In the media, there were numerous references to Chinese men's involvement in gambling houses and opium dens. The consistency of these references supported the idea that the Chinese were distinctly different, foreign, and criminal. Readers were consistently reminded of the crimes of Chinatown.

In a divorce suit reported in the *London Times*, where both the petitioner and the correspondent were Chinese, the reporter made room to note the petitioner's poor English. Though Chang Ping was in "smart European dress," he had great difficulty in taking the oath, seeming "unable to repeat the words of the oath as spoken by the usher."[43] Going further, the reporter shared Chang Ping's responses to the judge's questions:

> Mr. Justice Horridge—What is Mr. Yip?
> The petitioner—'E gamble.
> My Justice Horridge—How? Does he play fantan?
> The petitioner—'E play anytink. (Laughter.)[44]

The reporter starts by mocking the Mr. Ping's attempts to don European style clothing.

[42] With the Dowager Emperess Cixi's short-lived support of the Boxer rebels, one could argue that the Qing Empire was at war with the Allied forces.
[43] "A Chinaman's Divorce Suit, Chang Ping v. Ping and Yip," *London Times*, November 8, 1919, 4.
[44] "A Chinaman's Divorce Suit, Chang Ping v. Ping and Yip," *London Times*, November 8, 1919, 4.

He continues by sharing with his readers Mr. Ping's insistence to be sworn in the English way despite only being able to speak broken English. The British media depicted Chinese men as utterly foreign, uneducated, and embarrassing. This report implied that the Chinese man's flaw was not "properly" assimilating to English dress, behavior, and speech. Unlike other Chinese men, Chang Ping attempted to assimilate and was still mocked. A damned if you do, damned if you don't situation.

In *The Times*, in 1916, a journalist acknowledged that "many Chinamen are thoroughly respectable and a number of them are both smart and intelligent." However, he still argued that, "his ways are not our ways and his recreations do not fit in with law."[45] It is not clear whether this reporter's reference to Chinese men's recreations was specifically to gambling and opium rather than sex, for after this quotation, in the following three paragraphs, he comments on Chinese opium and gambling habits and associations with English girls.[46] Though some Chinese bought a British suit and learned English and though they were astute businessmen, they still held ties to China and tendencies toward Eastern habits, whether this be merely gambling, smoking opium, or mingling with and having relationships with underage British girls.

Newspapers capitalized on these fears and foreign habits of the Chinese when they affirmed images of Limehouse as queer and uncivilized.[47] In the *East End News*—an independent paper which circulated in the neighborhoods surrounding the docks—a reporter told readers what it was like to walk around Chinatown:

> In travelling down their 'headquarters', Limehouse Causeway, I have seen scenes that are disgusting. The Chinaman, ignorant of anything you say,

[45] "Chinese in London," *The Times*, Monday, September 11, 1916.
[46] The following three paragraphs dedicated to opium, gambling, and sex with impressionable British women leads me to believe that he believed all three were Chinese recreations to be criticized.
[47] For more on the queerness of Limehouse, see Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*.

> parades this place, where the smell is almost torture. Then, again, we can see English women associating with them. We also see some of the Chinamen not properly dressed where young children and young women are forced to go to their homes near at hand… Could we Englishmen do such as they are permitted to do in this locality—letting off fireworks half the night?[48]

According to this report, Chinese men did not properly dress when around young children and young women. Late into the night, they shot fireworks. This is reminiscent of the British distrusting the Italian populations for their loud street life and music.[49] The Chinese were not familiar with the British codes of proper dress and proper behavior. According to the newspapers, Chinese were the strangers who would not or could not assimilate. They were foreigners with queer habits and a penchant for associating with white women and acquiring white men's jobs.

When they attempted to assimilate, it was either a sign of their devious nature and attempts to undermine British culture or an example of their inadequate imitations of British culture and habits. While British media emphasized the Chinese not being able or willing to assimilate, it did not address the opposite problematic situation. If the Chinese did assimilate, this would suggest miscegenation. For this reason, the media did not focus on the assimilated Chinese who married British women and created "British" homes with "British" values. This would imply the creation of a multiethnic space within England and admit that there were homes where British and foreign elements combined to create a new traditions and new ideas of home and identity.

Instead, the media depicted relationships between Chinese men and British women as abnormal and deviant, and Yellow Peril literature showed the Chinese as

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[48] Quoted in Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie* , 110.
[49] For more on British opinions of Italians and their street life, see Lucio Sponza's *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Realities and Images* (Avon: Leicester University Press, 1988).

threatening men who preyed on white women.[50] Together, these depictions of Chinese men in the public combined to create an image of a British society which presumably objected to the marriages of English women and Chinese men. The association of white women and Chinese men symbolized "ethical abandonment and heralded the degeneration of society," and as Anne Witchard writes, "at a time when 'sexual secrets were considered commensurate with national ones' any visible independence of young women was targeted as tantamount to racial betrayal."[51]

The newspapers presented relationships between British women and Chinese men as racial betrayal. Women who married non-British men were required to register as 'aliens'. By doing so, "not only did many lose the support of their families, they also lost British citizenship."[52] If nations were about boundaries and mapping out property and resources, then presumably British women were crossing these boundaries, socializing with and sleeping with the enemy. This, of course, posed a problem in society as well as in the courts.[53] In the context of Australia, Jan Ryan examines criminal prosecutions of white women who had short and long-term relationships with Chinese men and found that a woman "who marries into 'colour' not only experiences social and political persecution, but faces a far great penalty, for society reconstructs her 'whiteness', orientalising her identity in view of her interracial relationship."[54]

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[50] Consider M. P. Shiel's *Yellow Danger* and Sax Rohmer's works, most notably, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu*.
[51] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie,* 7.
[52] Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 71.
[53] This can be seen in Jan Ryan's work, "Orient-ing White Women in the Courts of Law," *Journal of Australian Studies* 18.60 (1999), 149-159, 216-218, and in portions of Sascha Auerbach's book, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle*". Both give excellent examples of how the court and society view women who marry to Chinese men.
[54] Jan Ryan, "Orient-ing White Women," 149. For more on white women and the shifting image of whiteness, see Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

This concern about the relationships between Chinese men and white women eventually became the media's focus concerning the Chinese community in England. In an article for *London Magazine*, Herman Scheffauer did not focus on the labor issue—not surprisingly, seeing as this was a periodical for lighter reading—instead, he issued warnings of Chinese immorality and their penchant to pursue mixed marriages. In Scheffauer's opinion, the greatest immediate danger was the intermarriage between the English and the Chinese.[55] The newspapers attempted to show a perverse connection between Chinese men and British women as a way to sell papers and buy into the fears of the British public about new multiethnic spaces.

One way to show this perverse connection was to emphasize the low numbers of women in the Chinese community. In 1911, the census recorded 220 Chinese men but only 27 women. Who then were Chinese men to marry? The newspapers, however, did not use these numbers to explain attempts by Chinese men to marry and partner with British women.[56] Instead, the British media portrayed this habit of Chinese men as predatory, not necessary. Supposedly, Chinese men targeted British women, more specifically, young girls, for they were believed to be devoid of moral sense.[57]

Journals gave warnings to its young readers of the dangers of being friendly with Chinese men. In 1910 *The Girl's Own Annual* informed its readers about the Yellow Peril: "This enormous mass of humanity shows a marked tendency to spread out in all directions and overflow into the other countries of the world. It is this readiness of the Chinese to settle in the midst of other nations, and the evils which may follow in its train,

[55] "The Chinese in England: A Growing National Problem," *London Magazine*, July 1911, 651.
[56] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*. 111-112.
[57] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 111-112.

which constitutes the 'Yellow Peril'."[58] This being a warning to a younger audience, the writers gave vague implications of what followed when Chinese men settled in the midst of other nations. The reader's juvenile imaginations would have to fill in the blanks.

Though Chinese men were breaking no official laws, these relationships defied society's expectations. Legally, the government could not penalize or punish Chinese men for marrying white women. While it could not order its subjects not to marry Chinese men, the government could advise them against it. In 1924, the Foreign Office added the category "Chinese" to those listed in a warning statement given out by marriage registrars to British women. The list already included "Hindus, Moslems, African Negroes, etc."[59] Here, the government attempted to discourage miscegenation without directly prohibiting it. These government warnings, in combination with the newspapers' images of a certain low type of woman associating with Chinese men, helped to create public pressures against these unions.

The British media depicted marriages to "yellow" men as disgraceful. Headlines such as the *London Times'* "Educated Lady's Downfall" implied that marriages with Chinese men were the fall of white women. In a divorce suit between two Chinese men and a white woman, after recognizing that both the petitioner and the correspondent were Chinese men, Justice Horridge proclaimed, "The woman must have a fancy for Chinamen!"[60] Her dual marriages to Chinese men became a joke in the court, the crazed whims of a white woman.

The press, when writing about opium trials and raids, would, if Chinese men were

[58] Kathryn Castle, *Britannia's Children*, 136.
[59] Lucy Bland, "White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War," *Gender & History* 17.1 (2005), 45-46.
[60] *London Times*, November 8, 1919, 4.

married to an English woman, add this information. In a short piece about a Chinese man found harboring opium, the reporter thought it necessary to add, "Chong You was married to an English woman and had four children by her." [61] In the article "Chinese Vice in England: A View of Terrible Conditions at Close Range," Claude Baker, a reporter for the *Sunday Chronicle*, "managed to pack in references to the seduction of English girls through opium."[62] When connections between Chinese men and British women existed, they were emphasized to support the stereotype of predatory Chinese men acquiring white women and to associate these women with the lifestyle of gambling and opium. Despite these critiques of marriages between Chinese men and British women, these mentions also confirmed for readers that despite government warnings and newspaper implications, women were marrying Chinese men. There was a disconnect between the images the public media created and the reality of these multi-ethnic relationships.

The public media depicted these relationships and the spaces they created as unhealthy for British society. As a report in the *Evening News*, a newspaper aligned with liberal politics, described, "this cheapening of the white woman … must have reactions in the East, and in every part of the world where coloured and white races dwell side by side'."[63] "Coloured and white races" dwelling side by side, marrying, and having children invalidated the racialized power constructs of colonialism. Thus, as Ann Stoler shows in her work, it is important to study the domains of the intimate.[64] Studying domains of the intimate within England uncovers a multiethnic identity. These marriages between white

[61] "Harbouring Opium," *The Times*, August 15, 1919, 7.
[62] Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, 80.
[63] Quote from *Evening News*, 6 October 1920, Front Page, quoted in Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 114.
[64] Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 7.

women and Chinese men countered the racial binary of yellow and white used in the print media and implied a transfer of power from the hegemonic idea of British identity to a changing idea of Britishness, which more closely reflected the diverse ethnic makeup of the East End.

In the East End, these "coloured and white races" dwelled side by side and created a new border culture with a system of morals and expectations. In 1906, the *Weekly Courier* in Liverpool described this new space:

> On one side, in a dingy-fronted building, exists a noted pugilistic club; in another is a quaint Chinese restaurant; foreign names and Chinese characters distinguished the shop fronts…In this short and narrow, but by no means dismal, thoroughfare dwells in concert a motley population of British, Chinese, negroes and Scandinavians, coming and going on their own mysterious affairs, lounging and conversing on public house steps and in their own restaurants.[65]

Visibility of this multiethnic space and of Chinese men associating with white women concerned some British communities. In 1906, the conservative *Weekly Courier* of Liverpool, reported on the relationships of white women and men from the East. "Suddenly out of the dusk loom strange figures, moving with the stiff-jointed shamble of the Orient, and gazing with impassive eyes, set aslant in Saffron, mask-like faces … Strangest of all is it to see, romping and laughing, the off-spring of white women who have mated with negroes, Manilamen, Chinese and Malays."[66] These reports began as attempts to offer more publicity and incite interest in the 1906 General Election and in Chinese labor. In the end, the impact of such reports and of reports complaining of the Immigration Board's decision to send Chinese immigrants to Liverpool prompted an

[65] *Weekly Courier*, June 11, 1906.
[66] *Weekly Courier*, 1 December 1906, Cited in Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 60.

investigation into the Chinese community.[67]

The Liverpool City Council's Commission of Inquiry in 1907 investigated the morals, habits, and economic effects of the Chinese community in Liverpool. Citizens of Liverpool worried over the growth of the Chinese community and its supposed immoral impact through the habits of gambling, opium smoking, relationships with women, and brothels, and as previously mentioned, worried over the increasing numbers of Chinese-run laundries and their economic effect on British businesses. Combining these two spaces of private and public, this commission of inquiry required the city council to report on the Chinese morals, habits, and financial status—in short, complete surveillance.

It is important to note that the city of Liverpool raised its objections to the Chinese after the propaganda of the 1906 election, an election affected by the Chinese labor dispute in South Africa, which was previously discussed in chapter two.[68] As Anne Witchard notes, the anti-Chinese sentiment in the media "was chiefly the effect of a Liberal poster campaign which, intend[ed] to discredit Conservative opposition by highlighting the use of Chinese slave-labour in South Africa."[69] Whether it be a focus on the Chinese being sexually perverse and an influence on the indigenous people or a focus on their being used as slave labor by the British government, the media surrounding the international dispute of Chinese labor in South Africa created an interest in Chinese living in Britain. What was written of the lives of Chinese men working in South Africa influenced what was thought of the lives of Chinese men living in London and Liverpool.

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[67] See Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 62.
[68] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 121.
[69] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 105.

As discussed in chapter two, according to the Bucknill Report, the Chinese coolies working in South Africa were reported to be committing homosexual acts and intimacy. Those living in England following the scandal of South Africa might believe these same flaws existed among the Chinese community in Liverpool, that somehow the Chinese in Liverpool, too, were immoral and unsanitary. The Liverpool commission of inquiry instructed the city council to examine the Chinese community and to "strictly enforce all sanitary and other regulations."[70] The city of Liverpool feared that the circumstances in South Africa could be repeated in Liverpool. The labor debates of empire and the reports on sexuality in the mines of South Africa incited commission inquiries of morality in Liverpool.

These questions of Chinese morality centered on the Chinese habits of gambling, opium smoking, and relationships with women. British residents submitted allegations that Chinese laundries were nothing more than brothels. These allegations the commission found to be unsubstantiated. Newspaper coverage made it appear that a high propensity of Chinese men indulged in gambling. While the commission found this to be a prevalent habit, they also found cultural explanations for this habit. Chinese men were not social drinkers and entertainment at music-halls and theaters did not appeal to them. Instead, in Chinatown, hanging out at a gambling house offered them a public space outside of the "hostile gaze of white society."[71] Therefore, it was a habit practiced only among Chinese, and as for opium smoking, it was more prevalent with seamen than Chinese residents.[72]

[70] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 114.
[71] Maria Lin Wong, Chinese-Liverpudlians, 33.
[72] Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 63.

Initially, the community's concerns centered on the multiethnic relationships in Liverpool. The commission's findings validated some of these fears. The Commission gave the following statements as part of their conclusion:

> The evidence shows that the Chinese appear to much prefer having intercourse with young girls, more especially those of undue precocity…
>
> In three cases, which came to the knowledge of the police too late for criminal proceedings to be instituted, that is to say more than six months after the alleged offence, it appears that the girls taken advantage of were under 16 years of age at the time.[73]

However, the commission's findings also deviated from the prior suppositions of Chinese men and their behavior with British women. The chief constable of Liverpool in 1906 added to these findings and reported to the Home Office: "The Chinamen have no difficulty in getting English women to marry them, to cohabit with them, or to act the prostitute with them, and in all these relations they treat their women well, they are sober, they do not beat their wives and they pay liberally for prostitution."[74]

Maria Lin Wong interviewed children from these Chinese and British marriages and found a general consensus from those interviewed that British women preferred Chinese men because they were kinder and more considerate. One interviewee shared with her: "Most women were in families where there was drunkenness and people were beaten up. There'd be no money. Not all of them, but most of them were like that. Even around Pitt Street a lot of people had this problem. The men would get drunk and beat up the family, sometimes chuck the kids out on the street. The Chinese people were horrified with that, they couldn't understand it."[75] According to newspaper reports, the British community in Liverpool looked unfavorably upon these associations. But according to

[73] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 114.
[74] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 119.
[75] Maria Lin Wong, *Chinese-Liverpudlians*, 30-31.

the chief constable, Chinese men in marriage, domestic union, or prostitution treated the women favorably.

While the Liverpool Trades Council advised the city council to "strictly enforce all sanitary and other regulations…," the chief constable saw no cause for concern and relayed this in a letter to the Home Office.[76] In this letter, the chief constable also shared his opinion on the matter: "'there is no doubt a strong feeling of objection to the idea of the half caste population which is resulting from the marriage of English women to the Chinese…I cannot help thinking that what is really at the bottom of most of it is the competition of the Chinese with the laundries and boarding-house keepers'."[77] The images of Chinese men as sexually deviant and predatory did not match the findings of a metropolitan commission. The commission found that these sexual and moral concerns were a cover for the deeper concerns of the community, the economic competition of Chinese businesses and their ability to permeate into British society through marrying white women and vaunting themselves into the middle class by opening small businesses.

In 1910, in London, there was a similar investigation into the relations between Chinese men and young girls. Miss Robinson, the headmistress of one London County Council School, had witnessed her former students engage in relationships with Chinese men. She believed these men were corrupting these girls and using their wealth and access to opium to seduce these young girls.[78] Her beliefs of Chinese men using their wealth to seduce young, impressionable girls, of course, contradicted the other opinion of Chinese men taking jobs from British men because of their willingness to work for lower

[76] J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 115.
[77] Quoted in J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 115.
[78] It should be noted that Miss Robinson's reference to their wealth contradicts their taking jobs from British workers because they were willing to work for lower wages.

wages. Despite these contradictions, she acted on these fears and filed a report to investigate the associations of girls from her school with Chinese men in the community.[79] After investigating the relationships between these Chinese men and these former students, the investigation ended with this conclusion: "however undesirable this may be from an English point of view there is nothing criminal about it."[80]

A report from an inspector of the Public Control Department also contradicted Miss Robinson's allegations of Chinese men corrupting and seducing young girls. Inspector McIntyre found that intimate relationships between Chinese men and white women generally led to marriage, not prostitution. Though, personally, McIntyre and Sir John Pedder, the senior Home Office official who reviewed both reports, were distressed by the mixed-race unions taking place in the East End, they concluded that the Chinese men generally treated these women well and were breaking no laws.[81] These relationships may be undesirable, but they were not unlawful.

The reports and investigations of Liverpool and London were expected to mirror the homosexuality scandal of South Africa and uncover the immorality and predatory nature of Chinese men depicted in Yellow Peril plots. These allegations the reports found unsubstantial. Despite the fact that these government investigations cleared Chinese men of the allegations against them, newspapers and Yellow Peril literature continued to promote the stereotypes of Chinese men corrupting, seducing, and ruining white women. Rather than the image of British and Chinese cultures blending in the East End, the image of a constant struggle between white goodness and yellow depravity continued as the predominant representation of Chinese and British relations in print media. In an era

[79] Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle"*, 68.
[80] Quoted in J. P. May, "The Chinese in Britain," 113-114.
[81] Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and the "Chinese Puzzle"*, 68-69.

fragmented by labor distress, class struggle, and political change, the British print media kept to the unified vision of Chinese men as predatory toward white women, predisposed to aberrant sexualities, and disruptive to white labor.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIMEHOUSE NIGHTS: A DIFFERENT KIND OF PERIL

In the late nineteenth century and following through the turn of the century, Yellow Peril fiction flourished. At the turn of the century, there was a rise of Asian immigrants coming to Western areas, notably England and as well to America. Yellow Peril fiction exploited the fears associated with these increased numbers of immigrants and promoted the idea that white labor, white women, and white hegemony needed to be protected. In his famous Fu Manchu series, Sax Rohmer emphasized protecting British women and children from the Eastern "brutes" and proving British masculinity through the defeat of Chinese threats. Sax Rohmer, though arguably the most popular, was not the only author to use these themes.[1]

Thomas Burke wrote *Limehouse Nights* during this same time, and readers and scholars often lump his short stories into this same genre. His stories share similar settings as other Yellow Peril fiction—the neighborhoods of Shadwell, Pennyfields, Limehouse—all heavily Chinese populated areas of the East End. But these stories do not share the same themes as novels such as Rohmer's. Published in 1916 to instant notoriety, Burke's story "The Chink and the Child" was later turned into the black and

[1] See M. P. Shiel's *Yellow Danger*, Sax Rohmer's novels, Jack London's "Unparalleled Invasion". For H. Irving Hancock's stories of Li Shoon, newspapers of Australia and South Africa, see Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, and Kathryn Cronin, *Race relations in colonial Queensland: A history of exclusion, exploitation, and extermination*, 3rd ed. (St. Lucia , Queensland.: University of Queensland Press, 1993).

white film *Broken Blossoms*, famously directed by D. W. Griffiths. The book received laudatory reviews but "was banned for immorality by the national subscription libraries."[2] As *The Times Literary Supplement* protested, "in place of the steady, equalised light which he should have thrown on that pestiferous spot off the West India Dock Road, he has been content ... with flashes of limelight and fireworks."[3] Thomas Burke did not condemn the East End for its squalid conditions and for sheltering social outcasts but showed a hybrid East End instead.

Limehouse Nights was published in 1916 in the middle of World War One. While the book was published in the midst of the war, there is no mention of the war or implications that it is occurring at the same time. While there is no clear reference to World War One, both the modernist literature of World War One and *Limehouse Nights* share threads of uncertainty in their stories. Unlike during the Boxer Rebellion when morality was certain, *Limehouse Nights* is a move to modernity where right and wrong is blurred and the certainty of hero and victim is unclear. As such, the stories of *Limehouse Nights* work not as a continuation of Yellow Peril literature but as a step toward the multicultural and modern world of post-war Britain.

In Burke's Limehouse, the peoples in the East End combined to create a multi-ethnic space. The East End was a miscellany of peoples from across the globe. North of the Thames River and east of the medieval walled city of London, pedestrians in London walked by Chinese restaurants, Jewish jewelry shops, Huguenot schools, Catholic churches, boarding houses for foreign seamen, and Italian streets musicians. In

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[2] Anne Witchard, "Aspects of Literary Limehouse: Thomas Burke and the 'Glamorous Shame of Chinatown'," *Literary London Journal: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 2.2 (September 2004), 1.
[3] Anne Witchard, "Aspects of Literary Limehouse: Thomas Burke and the 'Glamorous Shame of Chinatown'," 1.

"London's crowded streets one might hear all the accents of the empire: the twanging inflections of Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and the 'goldbugs' of South Africa, the rounded intonations of the Irish, the unfamiliar enunciations of Asians and Africans."[4] This space the newspapers which distributed outside of the East End did not want to describe—the space where empire and metropole merged and where Chinese men and British women married and raised families—Burke dwells on. His portrayal of the East End as a lively multiethnic space sets Thomas Burke's stories apart from other representations of Chinatown at the time.

In 1916, when *Limehouse Nights* was published, ideas about Yellow Peril circulating in Britain were a "demonology of race and vice, bound up with anxiety about degenerative metropolitan blight and imperial and racial decline".[5] The Chinese portrayed in these stories "who lived in the Limehouse docks area were the scapegoats of Edwardian social ambivalence."[6] While this description was true of other Yellow Peril writers, in *Limehouse Nights*, Chinese men are not the scapegoats of Edwardian society. Not every character in Burke's stories is an opium addict, a perpetual foreigner never being able to assimilate, a cunning initiator of violence, or a man who sneakily misleads and deceives British women into marriages. Though some are greedy shop owners like Kang Foo Ah in "Gracie Goodnight," there are also Chinese men who are good fathers and husbands.[7] In *Limehouse Nights*, Chinese men are poets and masterful lovers, joyous rogues, men with faults but still compassionate and protective of their families. Most importantly, they are individuals.

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[4] Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900*, 8
[5] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 2.
[6] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 2.
[7] See the story "The Father of Yoto" in Thomas Burke, *Limehouse Nights* (London: G. Richards, 1916).

In *Limehouse Nights*, women marry Chinese men, give birth to mixed babies, smoke opium, and hang out in gambling halls.[8] So far, these have been the personalities and habits scholars have focused on—the type of women associating with Chinese men and the relationships between the two.[9] In both literary and historical scholarship, following the images of Chinese men in the newspapers, Chinatown fiction has been read as a commentary on the relationships between British women and Chinese men. For my research, I will focus less on the types of women associating with Chinese men and more on the types of spaces Thomas Burke describes and how his representation of the East End differs from Yellow Peril fiction.

Thomas Burke shows the darker sides of London, but unlike Sax Rohmer, his depiction of London is not just Chinatown, not just the opium-smoked filled rooms of boarding houses. He shows the raw edges of London, places with men bitter and possessive and with women "to whom silks and wine and song are things to be desired but never experienced."[10] Burke offers differing ideas of Britishness than given in the newspapers. With headlines such as "Educated Lady's Downfall," some newspapers implied that relationships between British women and Chinese men were doomed, a step down in society. These newspaper reports were a morality tale of sorts. Thomas Burke does not write of relationships between British women and Chinese men to warn future generations. Instead, he describes some of these love stories as fairy tales.

The first line of *Limehouse Nights* reads, "It is a tale of love and lovers."[11]

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[8] Behavior emphasized in the research of Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie* and Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls.*

[9] See Marek Kohn's *Dope Girls* and Laura Tabili, ""Women of a Very Low Type": Crossing Racial Boundaries in Imperial Britain," in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, edited by Laura Frader and Sonya O. Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[10] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 17.

[11] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 7

Thomas Burke brings humanity to the East End with stories that tell of broken bodies, broken hearts, and jealous lovers. Unlike Sax Rohmer, whose stories are inundated with stereotypes whose purpose is to vilify Chinese men and glorify British males, Burke's stories are more complex. There are no villains and no heroes. *Limehouse Nights* is not a collection of formulaic stories where one race is in the right and the other always in the wrong. And unlike the newspaper representations of the East End as a seedy space where crime occurs, in these stories, Burke addresses his middle-class readers, "who comfortably wake and sleep and eat in Hampstead and Streatham" and reminds them that it is possible to "discover ecstatic beauty in the torn wastes of tiles, the groupings of iron and stone, and the nightmare of chimney-stacks and gas-works."[12] His stories bare this unexpected beauty but also expose some of the dark secrets of the East End.

Some of these dark secrets the public was already familiar with. Through slumming literature of the late nineteenth century, the middle class was able to inspect and experience the seedy neighborhoods and sordid lives of those living in the East End.[13] In Burke's mind, though, readers of slumming literature or faithful readers of newspapers only knew the surface of how the other half lives. These readers knew the "fried-fish shops that punctuate every corner… the 'general' shops with their assorted rags, their broken iron, and their glum-faced basins of kitchen waste; and the lurid-seeming creatures … Arab, Lascar, Pacific Islander, Chinky, Hindoo… the streets of plunging hoof and horn that cross and recross the waterways, the gaunt chimneys that stick their derisive tongues to the skies… the cobby courts, the bestrewn alleys, through

[12] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 18.
[13] Slumming was an activity in which middle class and upper class peoples would disguise themselves and visit the urban areas of a city to see the lives of the poor, the queer, the outcasts of society.
See Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

which at night gas-jets asthmatically splutter; and the mephitic glooms and silences of the dockside."[14] These are scenes Burke need not illuminate for his readers.

From reading slumming literature, participating in slumming, and taking part in social philanthropy, middle-class audiences were familiar with the behavior and living circumstances of the working class. But Burke does not recreate the working class neighborhoods of the middle class's imagination—Italian ghettos and Irish taverns and Jewish shops and Chinatowns, all self-segregated spaces. Instead, he shows how the East End and its diverse population interact and intermingle. Burke's characters frequent the same pubs and fight over the same women. Burke tells of "creatures with the lust for life racing in their veins; creatures hot for the moment and its carnival… young hearts asking only that they may be happy for one hour."[15] In the following stories, Burke shows how these young hearts are both capable of great compassion and even greater cruelty and offers his readers a look into the East End and how those living there are challenging and reforming the racial binary that British print media and popular literature promoted.

In the first story, "The Chink and the Child," Burke describes a Chinese gambling house: "low couches lay around the walls, and strange men decorated them: Chinese, Japs, Malays, Lascars, with one or two white girls […] scorbutic negro sat with a Jewess from Shadwell."[16] The East End offered spaces where people across cultures and nationalities met. As Thomas Burke describes, Limehouse Causeway was a street "where the cold fatalism of the Orient meets the wistful dubiety of the West."[17] In the East End, cultures mixed and people mingled.

[14] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 17.
[15] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 17.
[16] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 10.
[17] Thomas Burke, "Beryl, the Croucher," 46.

Thomas Burke sets the stories of *Limehouse Nights* in these places where multicultural people congregated. Cafes and shops and dance halls—Burke sets these stories in spaces where people from across the East End interacted and intermixed, women and men, sailors and shopkeepers, Chinese and British, Japanese and Irish. Several stories take place at the bar Blue Lantern.[18] In "The Gorilla and the Girl," many of the characters from previous stories mingle there. Hunk Bottles, Chuck Lightfoot, Battling Burrows, Sway Lim, Quong Tart, Pansy Greers, Marigold Vasiloff, Tai Ling—they are all at the bar with their different groups.

In "Gracie Goodnight," Gracie Goodnight works for Kang Foo Ah, a Chinese man with "hands begemmed like a Hatton Garden Jew's".[19] Burke allows his readers to draw comparisons between Chinese businessmen and the famous Jewish jewelers of Hatton Garden. As for Gracie Goodnight, she "had the loveliest hair that ever was seen east of Aldgate Pump—where lies that land of lovely girls and luxurious locks."[20] With such a British beauty as Gracie working at the shop, "boys, yellow and white and black, would come to the store and spend more money than they could afford on cigarettes which they didn't want and dried fruits which they couldn't eat."[21] The End End is a place where boys, yellow and white and black, excuse spending money to be in the presence of a beautiful girl.

The beautiful girls in Burke's stories are also multinational. In "The Father of Yoto," Thomas Burkes writes of Marigold Vasiloff. Vasiloff is not an Anglo-Saxon British last name. Russian, Eastern European, Jewish—the origin of this last name could

[18] "Beryl, the Croucher," "Old Joe," "The Gorilla and the Girl," "The Chink and the Child," "The Sign of the Lamp"—these all include scenes in the Blue Lantern.
[19] Thomas Burke, "Gracie Goodnight," 25.
[20] Thomas Burke, "Gracie Goodnight," 25. Aldgate pump is located on Aldgate High Street, the eastern-most gateway of the medieval wall of London which meets Whitechapel and the East End.
[21] Thomas Burke, "Gracie Goodnight," 25.

be any of these. After giving her an Eastern European last name, Thomas Burke describes Marigold as "the only white thing there […] the only pure product of these islands."[22] Burke accepts this multinational identity and describes it as British. In his stories, British identity is fluid, not static and stereotypical as print media represents. Marigold is no dark and deviant Eastern European but an "apple-cheeked girl, lovely and brave and bright."[23]

Burke's characters blur the images of Britishness. In "The Cue," Cheng Brander embodies the changing image of Britishness. At the music hall where he works, he is repeatedly called "Chink," "boy," "yellow rat," but as Burke describes "approached from behind, he looked English."[24] He is a mixture of English and Chinese features: "his face was flat, and his head was round. The colour of his skin was a murky yellow. He had almonds for eyes. His hair was oily. He was a half-caste: the son of a Shadwell mother and a Chinese father."[25]

Burke challenge notions of British identity and also notions of British morality. In "The Father of Yoto," Marigold Vasiloff discovers that she is pregnant but is unsure who the father is—"three yellow men, proud, jealous, reticent, and one vehement white man, hot-eared, inarticulate."[26] Thomas Burke knows the opinion of upper-class and middle-class society on such a situation and writes "that Marigold's conduct was, as the politicians say, deserving of the highest censure."[27]

In research of the early twentieth century, on the relationships between Chinese men and other men of color and British women, there has been a focus on the downfall of white women. With the rise of women's suffrage groups and increase of middle-class

[22] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 18-19.
[23] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 18.
[24] Thomas Burke, "The Cue," 45.
[25] Thomas Burke, "The Cue," 45.
[26] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 23.
[27] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 22.

population with single, independent, women living and working in London, the British government worried about a certain kind of woman.[28] These women were part of the public sector, women with jobs, financially independent and liberated women. They frequented the theater and music and dance halls. Through their work and their leisure activities, these women infiltrated areas of masculine dominance.[29] These women were freer with their minds, allowing themselves to embrace liberal ideas of the new century and to be freer with their bodies.

Arguably, this "certain type of women" could include Marigold who as a working-class woman was always in the public space. She frequented "loud music halls" and "saloons of the dockside [East India Docks]" which Burke describes as "a place of savagely masculine character."[30] At these saloons and music halls, Marigold "finds a minutes' respite from the eternal grief of things in the arms of any salt-browned man who caught her fancy," and in this story, she is unsure among four men who is the father of her unborn child. Marek Kohn argues that the Chinatown narratives asserted that "without protection and dependence women were in deadly danger".[31]

Burke's stories do not repeat these Chinatown narratives of women. Despite Marigold's predicament, she was in no danger. She needs no white man to solve her problem, to protect her, or for her to become dependent upon. The story of Marigold, a single woman pregnant with a child and unsure who is the father, is no cautionary tale. Burke explicitly states that while the story's setting is not the "Hoang Ho or the sun-

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[28] See Laura Tabili, "Women of a Very Low Type': Crossing Racial Boundaries in Late Imperial Britain," 165-190; Lucy Bland, "White Women and Men of Colour" *Gender and History* 17.1 (2005); and Marek Kohn's *Dope Girls*.
[29] See Andrew Blake's review of Marek Kohn's *Dope Girls*, *History Workshop Journal* 37 (Spring 1994).
[30] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 17-18.
[31] Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls*, 5

loved islands of the East," this is a fairy tale.[32] "When Marigold gave herself to Tai Ling… she did so because she was happy," not because she was a "certain type" of woman who preyed on immigrant men and lived the sordid life of always visiting seedy dance halls.[33] Marigold and Tai Ling are no menaces to society. Instead, they are "prosperous and happy," married with three children, and owners of a provision shop in Pennyfields.[34] The home that Marigold and Tai Ling create is a space outside of the print media's image of racially segregated British homes, and Tai Ling's compassion toward Marigold is an indictment of British hypocrisy.

In a separate story, Burke again gives an alternative image of family. In "The Chink and the Child," Battling Burrows, a British working-class man, chooses to be a single parent for a child that is not biologically his. By doing this, Battling Burrows dabbled in the world of domesticity.[35] Lucy, the girl who lived with him, was not his child but was a "bundle of white rags" which had been dropped at his door one night with a "recital of terrible happenings, an angered parent, of a slammed door."[36] Being a sentimental man, Battling took in this baby and for some eleven years raised it as his own. Battling Burrows, though a man who "loved wine, woman, and song," a fighter and a drunkard, willingly took on the responsibilities of fatherhood.[37] Though a working-class man, he willingly took on another expense, and without a woman in his home, raised an infant. Here, he was creating an alternate vision of domesticity and an alternate image of

[32] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 17.
[33] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 20.
[34] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 23.
[35] For more on British masculinity and the world of domesticity, see Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful assertions : masculinities in Britain since 1800* (New York: Routledge, 1991); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Ellen Ross, "'Fierce Questions and Taunts': Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914,F" *Feminist Studies* 8.3 (Autumn).
[36] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 7.
[37] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 7.

a working-class man for Burke's middle class audience.

In *Limehouse Nights*, Thomas Burke writes of alternate versions of romance and domesticity, and his characters have alternate fantasies than the ones represented in Yellow Peril fiction. In "Gina of the Chinatown," Gina everywhere builds romances: "She was a mandarin's daughter in Pennyfields. She was a sailor's wife in the Isle of Dogs. In the West India dock Road she was a South Sea princess, decked with barbaric jewels and very terrible knives."[38] His characters consume empire and its multi-ethnic images, and this shows through in their fantasies, behavior, and habits.

In "Sign of the Lamp," Poppy Sturdish, an English girl who lives on Poplar High Street, is known as "Chinese Poppy" for she frequents Chinese gambling houses and speaks "Cantonese, a little Swahili, and some Hindustani."[39] Those living in the East End are multicultural and multilingual. In "Tai Fu and Pansy Greers" Mohammed Ali "swore in a bastard dialect compounded of Urdu, Chinese, and Cocknese."[40] Thomas Burke's East End is a mixture of languages, domesticity, ideas of family. He deconstructs the binary of British and non-British, of acceptable and foreign. These stories contain pedophilia, drunkenness, abuse toward women and children, and in these stories, unlike in British society and Western ideology, this behavior is no respecter of race. Whether intentionally or not, Burke challenges this racial binary of good and evil, of masculine West and effeminate East, by writing a story in which a British captain penetrates a Chinese boy. It is not just the East with aberrant sexualities and tendencies toward pedophilia and homosexuality.

In "The Bird," Burke tells of a ship captain and his Chinese boy-slave. Burke

[38] Thomas Burke, "Gina of the Chinatown," 78.
[39] Thomas Burke, "The Sign of the Lamp," 55.
[40] Thomas Burke, "Tai Fu and Pansy Greers," 61.

informs his readers that "it would make others sick if the full dark tale were told here of what the master of the Peacock did to that boy. You may read of monstrosities in police reports of cruelty cases; you may read old records of the Middle Ages, but the bestialities of Captain Chudder could not be told in words."[41] Whatever happens between the captain and this Chinese boy below deck, Burke leaves to his readers' imagination, only letting his readers know that from the times they were at sea until the moment they berthed at the Thames, the captain enjoyed an "orgy of drink and delicious torture."[42]

Today, the word sodomy commonly refers to acts of anal intercourse primarily between two men. At the turn of the century, the word sodomy carried a broader definition. According to the 1905 edition of *A Treatise on the Law of Crimes*, sodomy was "sexual connection by a man or woman with a brute animal, or connection per anum by a man with any other man, or with a woman."[43] Bestiality was a form of sodomy, and the mention of the word bestiality might imply sodomy in the minds of readers.

Below decks, the boy suffers through that "day's ceremony" and writhes under the "ritual of punishment" as the Captain enjoys his "orgy of drink and delicious torture" and the parrot serves as an attentive witness.[44] The language Burke uses to describe the cruel and bestial behavior of the Captain is reminiscent of the language of the Church of England and its religious observances. Burke uses sacred language, holy language, to describe acts that most British deemed most unholy. By partaking of his drink of orgy and his delicious meal of torture, the Captain below deck is observing and recreating his own carnal Eucharist.

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[41] Thomas Burke, "The Bird," 70.
[42] Thomas Burke, "The Bird," 70.
[43] William Lawrence Clark, William L. Marshall, Herschel Bouton Lazell, *A Treatise on the Law of Crimes* (ed. 2) 1905, ix. v. §461. 706.
[44] Thomas Burke, "The Bird," 70.

Once the ship berths in London, the boy escapes and returns to the ship at night to kill the captain. When he enters the captain's quarters, he sees that the captain is lethargic from drinking so much that evening, making it easy for the boy to plunge a knife into the man's heart. While he plunges this knife in, the captain's parrot repeats words he has heard in the cabin:

> Lively, you damn Chink! Lively, I tell yeh. Dance, d'yeh hear? … I'll give you something with a sharp knife and a bit of hot iron, my cocky. I'll make yer yellow skin crackle, yeh damn lousy chopstick. I'll have yeh in a minute. And when I get yeh, orf with yeh clothes. I'll cut yeh to pieces, I will.[45]

His owner now dead, the bird takes on his owner's attitudes and takes revenge. As the bird flies around the room taking jabs at the boy's eyes and face with his beak, it repeats the phrases that he has heard from the captain.

In this story, it is the Chinese boy being penetrated, thus being the more effeminate and passive partner; more importantly, this story portrays a British man sodomizing another man. No matter what happened below decks, sex between men was not openly tolerated in British society or in the Royal Navy. Nor was it so openly discussed in popular literature. Not until the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 was homosexuality legalized in Great Britain, and for Thomas Burke to write so explicitly of a British captain raping a Chinese boy was scandalous. This story counters the common idea of Oriental vices such as sodomy being spread to the Western hemisphere. Unlike in Yellow Peril literature, the Chinese boy in this story is the victim and the British man the perpetrator.

Unlike the newspaper's critique of Chinese men and the affairs of the East End, Thomas Burke does not explain his characters' actions as individual moral flaws but as

[45] Thomas Burke, "The Bird," 74.

situational, provoked by upsetting circumstances or economic stress. In "The Paw," Burke tells of Greaser Flanagan, "a weak man, physically and morally flabby" who had neither the "courage for evil or the tenderness for good."[46] Though he seldom swore and did not drink, "he was a bit of a hop-hoad, and did sometimes hire an upper room in the Causeway, and sprawl his restless nerves on the solitary bed, with a pipe of *li-un* or a handful of snow."[47] While Greaser does not drink, he does rest his nerves with opium and cocaine. Interestingly, Burke writes that Greaser snorts cocaine, a drug believed to be more of a middle-class practice.[48]

At first, Burke depicts Greaser as a man of self-control. He did not drink, did not smoke, and seldom swore. He is not a bad man. He is not a drunkard, does not beat his wife and child; in fact, "of all things in the world he loved only her, his crawling blood only [running] warm when she was by."[49] Greaser is a reminder that even average men, men who love their wives and are home for supper, have the capacity for evil. The grief of a lifetime, the unfairness of life, as Burke exclaims, "scalds and itches and bruises and burns the body of you, and colours every moment of thought, and strangles your sleep!"[50]

When Greaser learns that his wife has left him for Phung-tsin, a Chinese man living in Pennyfields, he experiences a crisis, that grief of a lifetime, and it pushes him to dark places he would have never foreseen. When his wife leaves, he is left with nothing. Burke describes him as "a mere flabby Thing in a cotton suit."[51] That is until he becomes "a new man—a man with an idea—a fixed goal—a haunting." Greaser decides he wants

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[46] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 32.
[47] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 32. See Cassell's *Dictionary of Slang*, 888: "li-un" is a nineteenth-century word for high quality smoking opium.
[48] See Marek Kohn, *Dope Girls*.
[49] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 33.
[50] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 33.
[51] Thomas Burke, "The paw," 33.

the Chinaman killed but knows that he neither has the pluck nor strength to do it. Then, he thinks of his daughter whom he has never much noticed before. She would be perfect for the job.

Burke tells the readers that "if Greaser heard of what he was about to do as the conduct of another, he would have turned sick."[52] But Greaser was mad, soberly mad, mad enough to starve his own child and to beat his daughter with a dog whip and with his fists. Every day, he repeats, "Someone's gotter stick a knife inside that bloody Chink!"[53] After each beating, he tells Myrtle she is being beaten "cos yer ma's gone with the yeller man, that is."[54] At times while he whips her, to a music-hall tune he sings a song he created, "Someone oughter stick a knife—stick a knife—stick a knife—someone oughter stick a knife acrost that bloody Chink!"[55] He beats Myrtle until she slumps to the floor, having almost fainted, lacerated and quivering and bleeding. She is broken and ready to stick a knife into any man her father hates. In the end, Greaser's daughter stabs her mother, Daffodil, not the bloody Chink. Greaser's plot for revenge is foiled, and he is arrested, leaving no one to provide and care for his daughter, another orphan to the streets. Greaser's uncontrolled anger and callous, brutal behavior cost him his daughter, his freedom, and the thing he loved most in the world, Daffodil Flanagan.

In "The Chink and the Child," Burke gives redeeming qualities to ethnicities the newspapers depicted as deviant. In this story, Battling Burrows, a British working-class man, abuses an orphaned girl he willingly adopted, and Cheng Huan, an illegal immigrant and frequenter of opium dens—the kind of Chinaman the British public fears—saves the

[52] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 34.
[53] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 35.
[54] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 35.
[55] Thomas Burke, "The Paw," 35.

child. Again, in this story, Thomas Burke explains the character's actions not as moral flaws but as situational pressures. For Battling Burrows, when he was upset over a match or angry with his manager, he knew it would be unwise to throw a chair at his manager, especially because he was a good manager; instead, Battling found that using "a dog-whip on a small child is permissible and quite as satisfying."[56] Though the neighborhood suspected he flogged Lucy, he was still reputed by the boys "to be a good fellow."[57]

Rather than morally judge Battling Burrow's behavior, Thomas Burke gives his readers economic explanations for his actions. East End dockworkers "forced to spend most of their wages at houses of call in order to obtain work from the publicans, usually came home to their wives with only their drunkenness and two or three shillings to show for a week's work."[58] Battling Burrows, while under the influence of alcohol and under the stress of paying bills, beats Lucy, the twelve-year-old girl who lives with him, whose white face was "always scarred with red, or black-furrowed with tears."[59] Her position in the house was non-descript. To the casual observer "it would seem that she was Battling's relief punch-ball"; for he would whip the child when he was drunk, and he was drunk eight months out of the year.[60]

Aside from drunkenness and abusive behavior, Battling was a nationalistic British man. He "did not like men who were not born in the same great country as himself. Particularly he disliked yellow men. His birth and education in Shadwell had taught him that of all creeping things that creep upon the earth the most insidious is the Oriental in

[56] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 8.
[57] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 8
[58] Jon Lawrence, "Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914," *English Historical Review* 108 (1993). 649.
[59] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 8.
[60] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 8.

the West."[61] At the turn of the century, Britain worried about the worst sort of immigrants entering the country. The Alien Acts of 1905 allowed inspection of these types of unskilled and unproductive immigrants. It restricted immigration to fourteen ports and at these ports allowed immigration officers to examine and interview the steerage class, to see if they would add to the growing numbers of persons dependent on the Poor Law.

By the standards of the Alien Act of 1905, Cheng Huan in "The Chink and the Child" would have been labeled as an unproductive immigrant. He was a crimp, a slang term for anyone who violated the Merchant Shipping Acts and procured a job as a seaman without a license. In Shanghai, he loafed around the Bund until he was able to secure a job through coercion. Once in England, he moved from Cardiff to Liverpool to Glasgow, then to the Asiatics' Aid Society in London and lastly to Limehouse where he remained because "it cost him nothing to live there, and because he was too lazy to find a boat to take him back to Shanghai."[62] Cheng Huan is the Chinaman the media depicts, an unskilled immigrant leeching around London with no job and no desire to benefit society. He spends his days lounging at his window and smoking cheap cigarettes.

Burke gives his readers characters they are familiar with, a loafing immigrant and a working-class British man, nationalistic in his politics, against immigration and importing workers into London. Burke mixes this familiarity with a plot his readers are not familiar with—a Chinese man saving and protecting a British girl. Cheng Huan was no saint. He frequented the squalid areas of London where drugs were exchanged, and mingled among the sordid peoples of the East End. Burke gives Cheng Huan and Battling Burrows each faults. There is no clear distinction of one man being moral and the other

[61] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 13.
[62] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 9.

corrupt. In this story, the borders between decency and degeneracy are muddled.

In a drunken rage, Battling locks Lucy out of the house. Being homeless, she takes the advice of an older girl and walks the streets. It is there Cheng sees her and "from what horrors he saved her that night cannot be told, for her ways were too audaciously childish to hold her long from harm in such a place. What he brought to her was love and death."[63] Despite his yellow face, yellow hands, his smooth black hair, "he was the first thing that had ever spoken soft words to her; the first thing that had ever laid a hand upon her that was not brutal; the first thing that had deferred in manner towards her as though she, too, had a right to live."[64] In this story, Cheng Huan is neither a villain nor a man deceptively looking for ways to seduce British women. Instead, he is a caring man, a provider. When Lucy wakes in her new home, she sees the room swept and garnished with bead curtains, muslins of pink and white, bowls of flowers, and a lotion for the bruises on her cheek left by Battling Burrows.

In his stories, Burke illustrates how the problems associated with the East End come from circumstances of society, not from the supposedly innate character traits of the people living there. In the case of "The Father of Yoto," Burke acknowledges that Marigold Vasiloff's conduct was "as the politicians say, deserving of the highest censure" but excuses this because "she was young, and she needed money for this business—her first."[65] For the women in his stories, girls like Pansy Greers in "Tai Fu and Pansy Greers," "life for her, as for most of her class, was just a dark house in a dark street."[66] Her pregnancy was a result of her circumstances, not her character. Burke

[63] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 11.
[64] Thomas Burke, "The Chink and the Child," 11.
[65] Thomas Burke, "The Father of Yoto," 22.
[66] Thomas Burke, "Tai Fu and Pansy Greers," 61.

implies that the debauchery and drunkenness associated with the East End is no fault of these women or of the Chinese immigrants and other immigrants moving into the city but the fault of British society, low wages, high rents. For the happenings in the East End, he gives an economic explanation, rather than a moral explanation. Burke's Limehouse is not a reflection of racial impurity or of low-type girls making poor decisions.

In "Limehouse Nights," the men drink, smoke opium, gamble, and fight. Vengeance is always present. There is no sense of rational behavior, of logical decisions. In Burke's Limehouse, boundaries are crossed, not just the boundary of mixed-race marriages. His female characters are bold, independent, capable of taking their own vengeance and capable of protecting themselves. His women need no protection, and his men are not able to protect. Instead, Burke reveals men who share the same bad habits and qualities as the stereotypes given to men from the East, incapable of self-control, effeminate, and devious. Burke debunks these stereotypes by showing how these characteristics depend upon the individual, not the race.

By showing the humanity and fragility of Chinese men and of both British men and women, Burke breaks through Britain's racial binary of good and evil and the black and white world of the British media and of Yellow Peril fiction. Yellow Peril fiction "bolstered the belief systems of readers because it defined the borders between decency and degeneracy in a scenario."[67] Burke's fiction did not clearly define these borders, instead, muddled them more. He destabilized these prevalent conceptions of decency and degeneracy by showing that Chinese men can be both victims and heroes, that British men can be both valiant and cruel, that British women can both love and kill a Chinese man. There is no fine line in fiction or in real life of one race being diabolical and the

[67] Anne Witchard, *Thomas Burke's Dark Chinoiserie*, 131.

other destined for greatness. It depends upon the individual, and each individual is capable of cruelty and of compassion.

Burke debunks the ideas of the British race and morality, of empire and dominance. London society suffers from the same dilemmas British society says of China, not being able to control its people and opium use, having effeminate, impulse-driven men, allowing women and children to be disrespected and violated. How should London be in control of tariffs and the concession ports along China's coast when it cannot control the dockside areas of London? These stories exemplified the erosion of a supposed British national identity and instead portrayed the practicality and presence of cultures and races mingling in the East End. His stories were not banned because of their favorable representations of the Chinese but because of their representation of the East End as a place where foreign peoples mix with British subjects and assimilate. *Limehouse Nights* showed a different kind of peril within London, not one of predatory Chinese men, but one of white women and yellow men and brown men creating homes, starting families, and forming spaces that rejected the separation of the metropole and empire, of colonizer and colonized, and challenged the racial binaries of yellow and white, good and evil.

Burke's East End was a place where British and Chinese could cultivate relationships. These interactions between Chinese men and white men and women created a new border space in London where people held new ideas of domesticity and morality. To some, Limehouse was home, a place to raise a Chinese-English family or to meet a Chinese bachelor. And this new border space within London—this absorption and assimilation of empire in the metropole—not the Chinese, was the real threat.

CONCLUSION

In 1934, J. B. Priestley visited Liverpool and observed the neighborhoods where peoples from across the Empire had settled, married British subjects, and formed families. A vicar who accompanied Priestley on his tour of the Liverpool slums proclaimed, "Now that boy looks English enough, doesn't he? But as a matter of fact, he's half Chinese […] Queer isn't it?"[1] Though the vicar found these mixed-race children abnormally strange, Priestley celebrated this blending of Chinese and British features. In fact, Priestley tells his readers to "imagine an infant class of half-castes, quadroons, octaroons, with all the latitudes and longitudes confused in them" and then describes these as "all the races of mankind […], wonderfully mixed."[2] To him, this multi-cultural world was strange but also wonderful. As Priestley describes, "a boy could look pure Liverpool and prove to be three parts Chinese."[3] This racial uncertainty was not, however, to be condemned but rather celebrated. Although this view of the Chinese may have been alarming for many of Priestley's readers, Priestley was not particularly disturbed by these half-Chinese children nor was he alone in this opinion of the Chinese. In fact this view of the Chinese as an ambiguous and not always problematic presence in Britain held true for much of the early twentieth century.

Historians have argued that the concept of Yellow Peril circulated widely in

[1] J. B. Priestley, *English Journey*, Jubilee edition (originally published in 1934) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 181.
[2] J. B. Priestley, *English Journey*, 180.
[3] J. B. Priestley, *English Journey*, 180.

Britain in the early twentieth century. This thesis has shown, however, that British images of the Chinese were not stable but malleable.. Yellow Peril is too simplistic a construct to explain the relationship between the Chinese and the British. Instead, the shifting political relationship between Great Britain and China and the unique status of the Chinese as both semi-colonial and independent citizens complicated the ways in which the British media and public imagined Chinese men. Though some members of the British media and government attempted to create a universal stereotype of the Chinese through the discourse of Yellow Peril, no clear or coherent image of the Chinese dominated in early twentieth century British culture. The Chinese occupied multiple positions at once—intimate yet alien, segregated but integrated into British society, poor coolies and shrewd businessmen, masculine rebels and effeminate sodomites.

My thesis has not uncovered new images of Chinese men but has reframed the images already in circulation—images of Boxer rebels, South African coolies, and Chinese immigrants. I have focused on the Boxer Rebellion, Transvaal Labor Dispute, and the rise of Chinese Laundries in order to situate debates over the Chinese in Britain and its imperial territories in relation to problems of labor, economics, and sexuality thus demonstrating that Yellow Peril did not work as an explanatory discourse in these contexts. Government reports sometimes defended the Chinese against claims of indecency and contamination, and the British public often sympathized with the Chinese when used as slave labor. By analyzing the treatment of the Chinese in these particular historical moments, I have shown that British relations with the Chinese were contradictory and shifting. These complicated images of Chinese men cannot be succinctly described through the lens of anti-Chinese sentiment or accurately

deconstructed when analyzed through the discourse of Yellow Peril.

Indeed despite what some newspapers claimed and what Yellow Peril fiction presented, some Chinese had already integrated into British society by speaking the language, owning small business, donning British style of dress, and forming British families. As I have argued, Thomas Burke's stories of the multi ethnic East End published in 1916 predate Priestley's celebration of a multicultural 1930s Britain. Rather than continuing to read Thomas Burke as a Yellow Peril author, I therefore treat his stories as working outside the binaries of white/yellow and good/evil. I argue that Burke's stories are not the continuance of Yellow Peril literature, which supported racialized stereotypes, but are the beginnings of a modernist literature open to ambiguities and uncertainties of all kinds. To understand better this transitional phase toward modernity, scholars must consider images of Chinese men in the early twentieth century not merely in the context of Yellow Peril literature but as a step toward a multicultural post war Britain.

This thesis has mapped the ambiguous nature of the Chinese presence in Britain and its Empire in order to argue that contradictory images of the Chinese circulated widely in the early twentieth century and in the process challenged the binary of white British subject and Imperial yellow peril. It thus presents a significant departure from scholarship on the Chinese in the British imagination and I hope will contribute to more nuanced histories of immigration, empire, and globalization in Modern Britain.

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